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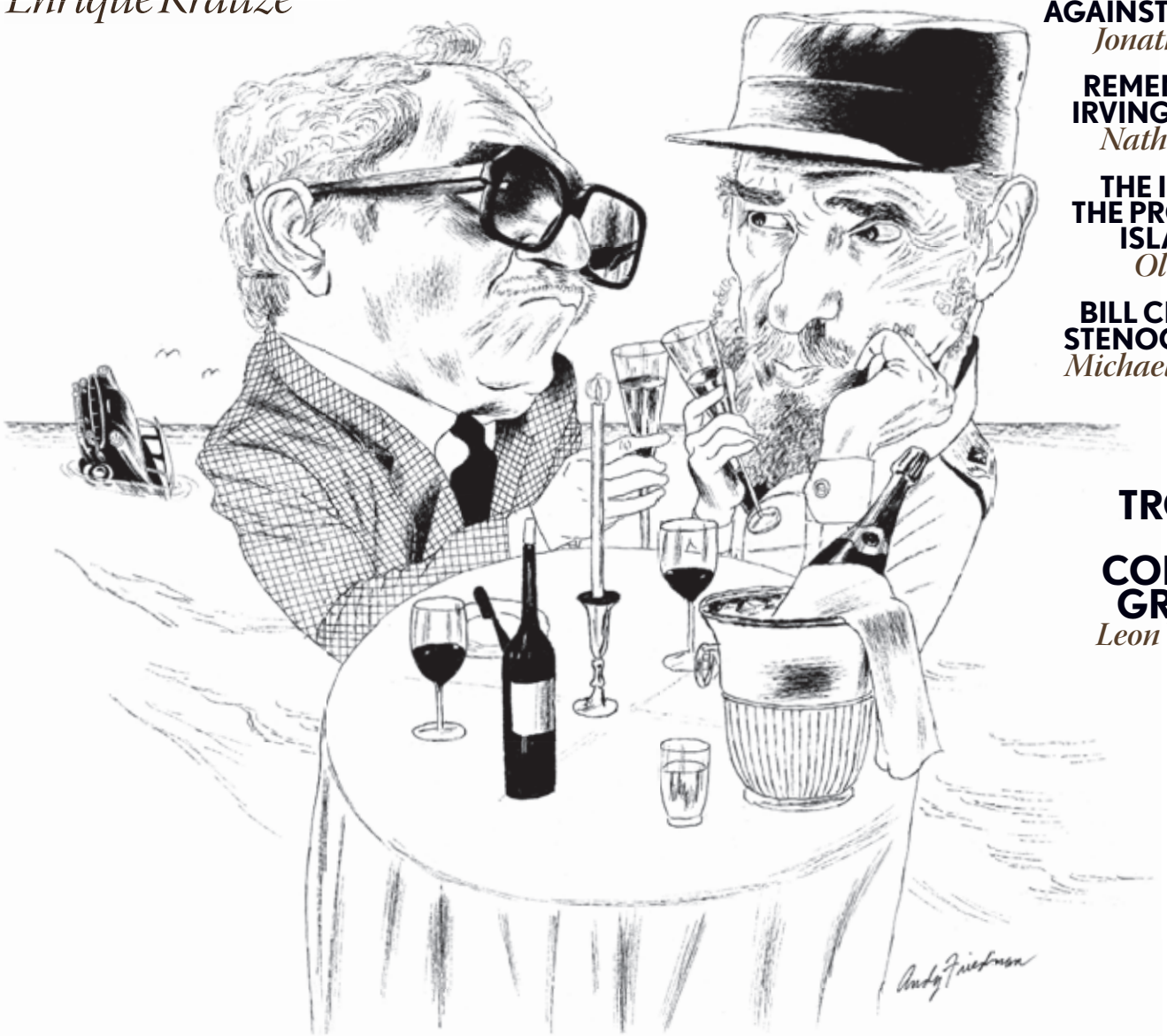

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
A Journal of Politics and the Arts

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Spend and Deliver

Congress has been formally debating health care reform for almost nine months. And the country, as a whole, has been debating it for years. But now that the last congressional committee with jurisdiction has approved legislation, lawmakers are confronting the essential conundrum that's bedeviled this issue all along: Their desire to expand health insurance coverage exceeds their willingness to pay for it. As deliberations move to the House and Senate floors, then on to conference-committee negotiations, something has to give.

You can see the dilemma in the bill that the Senate Finance Committee passed last week. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) determined that the Finance bill both pays for itself and would actually reduce federal spending (relative to what it would otherwise be) over the long term. But to produce a bill that would get the CBO's blessing, the committee decided to scale back what reform would offer. Relative to the bills that passed the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee or its three counterparts in the House, the Senate Finance measure offers, overall, less financial assistance to people buying insurance, while guaranteeing less insulation from medical bills for those who buy it. A family earning $55,000 per year, for instance, could owe more than $11,000 in combined premiums and out-of-pocket expenses—or roughly one-fifth of its total income.

BAUCUS, PELOSI: Jim Young/Reuters/Landov; WAXMAN: Roger L. Wollenberg/UPI/Landov; SNOWE: Michael Connor, The Washington Times/Landov

Nobody seems particularly thrilled about this. On the Finance Committee, liberals like Jay Rockefeller and Charles Schumer voted for the bill but pledged to address these problems as the legislative process moves forward. Olympia Snowe, who provided the bill with its critical Republican vote, made similar vows. The same consensus seems to exist in Congress as a whole and, if the will to make improvements is strong enough, there is certainly a way.

Many ways, in fact. Making health insurance less of a financial reach—and guaranteeing that it offers more protection—is simply a matter of finding a little more money. Congress could increase the Senate Finance bill's proposed excise tax, which would affect the most generous benefit plans. Most economists believe that the tax would not only generate revenue; it would also prod the health care system toward greater efficiency and lower cost. Alternatively, the House bills all contain an income surtax that would affect only the very wealthiest households. And President Obama has proposed a cap on the deductibility of charitable contributions, which would hit essentially the same people.

One final source of funds is the health care industry itself. The Finance bill calls for changes in the way doctors, hospitals, and the makers of drugs and devices get paid—changes that would, in theory, encourage them to be more efficient while freeing up government dollars. But the industries—particularly the drug industry and hospitals—got off relatively easy. Legislators could push for more aggressive changes and, in the ideal world, create a public insurance option that would use its bargaining leverage to make those changes stick.

With so many ways to raise revenue, finding some combination capable of winning majorities in both chambers would seem simple. It isn't. Liberals don't like the insurance excise tax, in no small part because unions don't want it affecting older workers who won generous benefits in past collective bargaining agreements. Centrists want no part of taxes outside the health care system, particularly those that target the wealthy. And neither group seems seriously interested in extracting more concessions from the health care industry, which may have a little something to do with the fact that it bankrolls so many political campaigns.

It's possible that everybody is posturing in order to gain maximum bargaining power for the conference-committee negotiations—which is where, quite possibly, the final deal on money will come together. If that happens, finding additional revenue will be possible. But it's just as possible that Congress will further cut funding and that the White House will say OK. On the Finance Committee, Schumer and Snowe partnered on amendments to weaken the requirement that people buy insurance. Without more money on the table and a better set of insurance options—including, ideally a public plan—there will be pressure to weaken that requirement further.

The argument is that it's not fair to make people buy insurance when it's too expensive and doesn't cover enough. That's true. But the answer is to make insurance more affordable and more protective, not to let more people out of the requirement. Make no mistake: A bill with less funding is a bill that helps fewer people. That's bad policy and, by the way, bad politics, too. ◆

Anastasia Vasilakis

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The Case Against Awards

Why the wrong person always wins.

JONATHAN CHAIT

Last month, rapper Kanye West interrupted an MTV Video Awards ceremony to protest the selection of Taylor Swift for "Best Female Video." So widely did the fallout from this episode spread that President Obama soon weighed in against West ("He's a jackass"). Obama himself would soon become the subject of a similar award-related imbroglio, when he was bizarrely chosen as the winner of the Nobel Peace Prize. No doubt one of the conservative pundits waxing indignant about Obama's Nobel will one day nab one of those lucrative prizes conservative pundits are always awarding to each other, while some more deserving reactionary mutters angrily to his friends.

Such is the nature of awards. Nearly every field of human endeavor has a regular prize. And nearly every prize seems to regularly go to a clearly undeserving winner. Woody Allen's character complained in *Annie Hall*, "They're always giving out awards. Best Fascist Dictator: Adolf Hitler." If an award like that really did exist, though, they'd probably end up giving it to Mussolini.

I started having my doubts about awards at the tender age of 13. NASA had announced it would select one teacher for a trip on a space shuttle. The dopiest, flakiest teacher in my school decided to apply. Naturally, she was one of two teachers in the state of Michigan selected as a finalist, out of more than 10,000 applicants.

This recollection was so surreal that I recently decided to look it up. Perhaps my memory had failed—surely, either she was smarter than I remembered, or she could not actually have been selected by a federal agency as an elite representative of the teaching profession.

The truth was actually worse than I remembered. A 1985 Associated Press article on her selection described her as a "puppeteer, ventriloquist, hot air balloonist, and former airline stewardess." (My brother, whom she taught in seventh grade, recalls that the puppets figured prominently in her teaching method.) The article describes the proposal she pitched to NASA. "Her proposed special project on the shuttle," the AP reported, "calls for running up 'the biggest telephone bill in history' by contacting children at their homes and having her puppet talk with them, maybe even help them with their homework." Clearly, she was no rocket scientist. But the people at NASA *were* rocket scientists. And they apparently found her plan impressive.

Some years later, Gino Toretta of the University of Miami won the 1992 Heisman Trophy, which goes to the best college football player. Toretta was approximately the third-best player—at his position, within his state. He was probably one of the worst starters on his own team. Toretta went on to be selected in the next-to-last round of the NFL draft, where —without suffering any major injuries—he completed a total of five passes in his career.

In my field, we have something called the National Magazine Awards. Magazine writers tend to be both obsessed with who wins and convinced the process is a pathetic joke. This isn't just sour grapes, either. The last time THE NEW REPUBLIC won a National Magazine Award, it was for publishing Betsy McCaughey's infamous anti-Clintoncare screed "No Exit," which is probably the worst article in the history of TNR. It's as if the last American to win the Nobel Peace Prize was Timothy McVeigh.

Are these cases unusually egregious? Perhaps. But they are not wildly out of character with how awards generally work. A recent statistical analysis by Robert T. Hodgson, published in the *Journal of Wine Economics* (I kid you not), found that a wine that wins one competition is no more likely to win another competition than any other wine. Which is to say, wine awards are handed out completely at random. If you listen to movie buffs, they will tell you that the Academy Awards regularly commit unforgiveable sins of commission or omission. Look closely at any field that gives out awards, and you will probably find that injustice is more the rule than the exception.

Our mania for awards stems from a desire to sift through a chaotic world and impose linearity and a singular winner. Nearly everybody can agree that *The Godfather* is a better film than *Earnest Goes to Camp*. But if you're deciding between *Gone with the Wind* and *The Wizard of Oz*, you're merely trying to quantify a simple matter of taste. Declaring one great work of art superior to others is like having an official ranking for best ice cream flavor.

Yet awards provide emotional responses—gratification, victimization, schadenfreude—that makes the ritual perversely compelling. Understanding that the process is fatally flawed, or even corrupt, seems to do nothing to diminish its appeal. Those most convinced that, say, the Oscars do a horrible job of rating films are the very people who cling to their emotional investment in the outcome.

The *reductio ad absurdum* of subjectivity has to be the Presidential Medal of Freedom. The official criterion for winning is having made "an especially meritorious contribution to the security or national interests of the United States, world peace, cultural or other significant public or private endeavors." In other words, it has no criteria at all. It can go to virtually any famous person, though under George W. Bush it evolved into a Republican patronage operation, with awards going to like-minded ideologues (Irving Kristol, Robert Bartley, Norman Podhoretz, among many others) or the goats of the Iraq war (Tommy Franks, George Tenet).

A former speechwriter for George W. Bush recently revealed that the administration nixed J.K. Rowling's candidacy on the grounds that her books "encouraged witchcraft." With such arbitrary standards to begin with, who could possibly complain? If you're considering grounds to deny somebody an honor given out to Robert Bartley and Tommy Franks, suspicion of abetting witchcraft is as good a reason as any.

The Nobel Peace Prize, of course, represents the gold standard of all awards. ("I'd kill for a Nobel Peace Prize," as Steven Wright once put it.) Yet it's widely understood that the committee frequently chooses recipients in order to encourage or empower them, rather than to reward actual achievement. This year, the committee decided to give it to Obama because, well, he seems like such a nice young man.

The choice, judged on meritocratic terms, is completely silly, but no less so than the shock and outrage it produced. What do people expect? It's not like they gave the award to Hitler. ◆

TRB
From Washington

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The Mall

Pervez Dispenser

Musharraf lets loose in Baltimore.

Some simple rules of thumb for the foreign ex-dictator out to make a mint on the U.S. lecture circuit: Get yourself included in a speakers' series that features non-controversial names like Laura Bush and Jean-Michel Cousteau. Promise your "august audience" a "frank exchange." Maybe drop the names of one or two revered American leaders who are your close friends. And perhaps it is best not to admit that you wish you still had the power to "sort out" an impolite member of the audience.

That last nugget seemed to trip up Pervez Musharraf, the former Pakistani president, when he brought his coast-to-coast road show to Baltimore one recent evening. Musharraf was methodically explaining America's pre–September 11 foreign policy failures to a crowd of about 2,000 well-heeled locals when unintelligible catcalls started ricocheting through the Meyerhoff Symphony Hall. At first, Musharraf ignored the shouts, but the refrain, in a heavy South Asian accent, eventually grew clearer: "Dictator!"

For many speakers, responding to this sort of interruption might involve that most basic maneuver of war and politics: seizing the high ground. The audience, after all, had paid between $265 and $395 for a series of lectures from prominent people, not taunts from anonymous hecklers. A few words about civility and politeness and respect might have gone a long way—especially for a guy determined to recast himself as a statesman. Musharraf, alas, rose to the bait.

"Yes, I was," Musharraf shot back at the man who called him a dictator. "I wish you were there so I could have handled you also." After some murmuring, things settled back down, but the distractions started up again a few minutes later. Eventually, as talk turned to Pakistan's relations with India, the general decided to engage again. "Maybe the gentleman who's talking belongs to India," he said of the Joe Wilson figure in the upper balcony.

This was apparently too much for the gentleman, who shouted back that he was in fact from Baluchistan, the perpetually restive southwestern province that borders Afghanistan and Iran. "In Baluchistan, people like you who want to get away from Pakistan need to be sorted out," Musharraf thundered. "That is what I did. . . . If you were there, you would have been sorted out by me. He thinks I'm a dictator. I'm a dictator for people like you!" Tonight, at least, the line worked: The crowd applauded as the heckler was silenced.

As it happens, this sort of exchange is unlikely to affect Musharraf's stateside reputation, for good or ill. Neither is the rest of his 90-minute chat, which hits such newsworthy subjects as the security of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal (strong), the whereabouts of Osama bin Laden (unknown), and whether Washington should keep its troops in Afghanistan (absolutely). Though the traveling ex-president is holding forth on the year's biggest foreign policy debate, the press hasn't exactly hailed him as a visiting oracle. A South Dakota lecture made the local daily, but the Baltimore one didn't.

Musharraf surely knows his way around the American media. When he published his autobiography, he sipped tea with Jon Stewart on "The Daily Show." And, since his lectures need to justify a speaking fee that's reportedly in the six figures, it'd be reasonable enough for organizers to cast him as some latter-day

WHITE HOUSE WATCH ***With* DREW FRIEDMAN**

Levi Johnston's Playgirl *spread arrives in Wasilla.*

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version of the 1946 Winston Churchill, a deposed leader barnstorming the backroads of his old ally, stiffening spines in the face of a new challenge.

But the lectures' real purpose, other than the obvious remunerative one, doesn't involve enlightening the good people of St. Louis or Sarasota who've forked out for his speeches. It's aimed at the folks back home in Pakistan, where his tour gets energetic media attention. Of course, the average person in Multan or Gujranwala doesn't know Augustana College in Sioux Falls (October 2) from the World Affairs Council of Houston (October 10). That's just the point: From a distance, the appearances don't look like a has-been cashing in on the lecture circuit. They look like examples of America's deep and abiding respect for the former president.

This image is no small thing. In Islamabad, the opposition Pakistan Muslim League wants Musharraf tried for treason, which carries the death penalty. But, as the old cliché has it, Pakistani politics revolves around the three As—America, Allah, and the Army. So publicizing the news that Americans pay $100,000 a pop to listen to the ex-president serves as a significant deterrent: The prospect of bien-pensant lecture attendees in Pittsburgh and Providence implies that the first A still has Musharraf's back. (As for the second A, Musharraf also got coverage for a recent visit with King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia; the king reportedly promised to lobby against a trial, too.)

Musharraf is hardly the first ex-leader to pad his income via a trip around another nation's lecture circuit—Bill Clinton has done quite nicely, as did Ronald Reagan. And the London resident is not even the first Pakistani exile to use friendly Americans as a prop for the domestic market—something the late Benazir Bhutto, with her cadre of Harvard classmates, did exceedingly well. (Like Bhutto, Musharraf has also made less-remunerative stops at insidery haunts on Capitol Hill and think tanks.)

But, before they conclude that Americans are entirely reverential toward their ex-leader, the pols back home might want to take a look at one of the events. In Baltimore, even the Baluch nationalists, numbering fewer than ten, didn't look like the sort of angry mob worthy of a major figure. Outside the hall, there were reminders about an upcoming talk by Mia Farrow. A display table touted the new criminal-justice program at Stevenson University, a sponsor of the event. Stevenson marketing people passed out mints bearing the school's URL and the slogan "Greenlight Your Career." It was a strangely fitting message for the evening. After all, when your military dictatorship doesn't pan out, there's always speechmaking in Baltimore.

Michael Schaffer

Michael Schaffer is the author of One Nation Under Dog.

The Interested Man

Up from the Alcove with Irving Kristol.

When Irving Kristol joined the new magazine *Commentary*, he distinguished himself from the other editors—Clement Greenberg, part-time then, Robert Warshow, and me. First, he had an interest in politics, real politics, electoral politics, and not just the politics of left-wing anti-Stalinists, mulling over what was living and what was dead in Marxism, the fate of socialism, the future of capitalism, communist influence in the intellectual world—no mean issues, but hardly ones to affect who won and who lost an election. So Irving discovered the wonderful political reporter and analyst Sam Lubell in the pages of *The Saturday Evening Post*, persuaded him to write for *Commentary*, and made me an enthusiast for his books, now hardly noted (although Sam Tanenhaus's recently published *The Death of Conservatism* uses one of Lubell's central theses as a guiding theme). None of the rest of us had ever read or noticed *The Saturday Evening Post*.

And second, Irving was interested in theology and religion and in theologians—Protestant and Catholic theologians, to be sure (Reinhold Niebuhr and Jacques Maritain, and there were others). But he then decided—it had occurred to none of the rest of us—that he ought to know more about Judaism, and he was able to recruit me to join a Talmud study class, for which we found a willing junior faculty member of the Jewish Theological Seminary. The class met only briefly, but its initiation was something that could not have been expected from any of the other editors.

I think back to these early days because it seems to me that Irving was all of a piece, almost from the beginning. No comment on his passing has failed to mention the young Trotskyist of Alcove 1 at CCNY. But what other young ex-Trotskyist of 1943 would have been interested in reviewing Lionel Trilling's *E.M. Forster*, and in going back to Trilling's 1940 *Partisan Review* essay on T.S. Eliot's *Idea of a Christian Society*? In that review in *Enquiry*—"a journal of independent radical thought," actually an organ of ex-Trotskyists—Irving tells us that Trilling "subjected the liberal-socialist ideology to a vigorous and pointed chiding." He quotes Trilling's criticism of the idea that "man, in his quality, in his kind, will be wholly changed by socialism in fine ways that we cannot predict: man will be good, not as some men have been good, but in new and unspecified fashions." Socialism and radicalism, in this view, expect too much from politics, from reform, from, indeed, revolution—they will not, cannot change man in his essential qualities. The "moral realism," Irving writes, of Forster and Trilling is better: "It foresees no new virtues. … It is non-eschatological, skeptical of proposed revisions of man's nature, content with the possibilities and limitations that are always with us."

Irving quotes approvingly Forster's "two cheers for democracy: One because it admits variety, and two because it permits criticism. Two cheers are quite enough." That is all that any political ideal warrants.

That was 1943, and 66 years of writing, magazine editing (*Encounter*, *The Reporter*, *The Public Interest*), magazine founding, stimulating young writers, and promoting liberal capitalism followed. But it was always only "two cheers for capitalism," despite his columns in *The Wall Street Journal* and his close involvement with the American Enterprise Institute. As early as 1970, Irving was in complete agreement with Daniel Bell, his co-founder and co-editor at *The Public Interest*, on "the cultural contradictions of capitalism," on how capitalism inevitably undermines itself. Irving wrote that capitalism had pledged three things: affluence, individual liberty, and "the promise that … the individual could satisfy his instinct for self-perfection—for leading a virtuous life that satisfied his spirit (or, as one used to say, his soul)—and that the free exercise of such individual virtue would aggregate into a just society. … It was only when [this] third promise … was subverted by the dynamics of capitalism itself, as it strove to fulfill the other two—affluence and liberty—that the bourgeois order came, in

ANTHONY RUSSO

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the minds of the young especially, to possess a questionable legitimacy."

No one has put it better. Irving later noted that "bourgeois society was living off the accumulated moral capital of traditional religion and traditional moral philosophy and that once this capital was depleted, bourgeois society would find its legitimacy ever more questionable." And so his tolerance and sympathy for religion, the more orthodox and traditional the better. That was questionable, and rubbed many (including me) the wrong way. In the latter days of *The Public Interest*, there were too many articles on how public policy could help promote marriage and stem the decline of the traditional family. Following the disciplinary tendencies of most sociologists, who simply project an ongoing change into the future, I thought neither traditional religion nor the family could resist the onslaught of commercial society.

Irving Kristol's "neoconservatism" has been hijacked.

Irving found the limitation of *The Public Interest* to domestic affairs confining and founded *The National Interest*, recruiting the wonderful Owen Harries from Australia to edit it and hoping it would provide a platform for a more realistic (I think that is the term he favored) approach to foreign policy. Oddly enough, such an approach was in contradiction with what came be known as "neoconservative" foreign policy: Irving was skeptical early on about imposing or promoting democracy in South Korea or Vietnam (he was wrong about South Korea), and, undoubtedly, he would have been equally skeptical about its prospects in Iraq and Afghanistan. The term "neoconservatism" was hijacked. In its early application, in the 1970s, it referred to the growing caution and skepticism among a group of liberals about the effects of social programs. It was later applied to a vigorous and expansionist democracy-promoting military and foreign policy, especially in the wake of the dissolution of the Soviet Union. There was some reason to the hijacking—after all, a second generation of "neoconservatives," some of it literally second-generation, was promoting this policy. But some of us who were labeled early as neoconservatives, a characterization not of our choosing, such as Daniel P. Moynihan, Daniel Bell, and myself, found it astonishing and unsettling.

I think Irving himself was a realist and cautious on these matters, in the style of Walter Lippmann, whom he admired. We did not often speak of foreign affairs, but I recall a discussion about Israel, in the days when I was active in a dovish group that argued in favor of giving up the territories for peace. Irving was skeptical about Arab hostility: It would never be reduced. But that means war forever, I said. And Irving responded, Yup, it's war forever. This was the kind of direct and unmodulated response which often came from him, and which he could also deliver insouciantly to contributors whose articles he thought were just not good enough.

His views could make enemies, but he never let them interfere with friendship on his part, which to him transcended political disagreements. His ironic and skeptical and pragmatic temperament did not permit a disagreement to overwhelm a personal relationship. He had a remarkable capacity for responding to young people, and, as I have skimmed the remembrances of him, I have seen several by (now well-known) writers who were surprised by their invitations to meet him and to contribute to the magazine. His office at *The Public Interest* consisted of Irving in one corner and a group of junior editors and interns scattered around him, with intermittent discussion on articles arrived, coming, hoped for, on their virtues and defects, generally illuminated by a long view and one with deep roots in political philosophy. He was a remarkable educator, and his students are everywhere—alas, mostly on the right. I regret that, but we were friends.

Nathan Glazer

Recessional

The T. E. Lawrence of Afghanistan.

It's some 400 miles from Harvard Square to Capitol Hill, but when Rory Stewart made the trip last month, he chose an unlikely mode of transport: He took a plane. Stewart is an inveterate, epic walker. He spent part of this past summer strolling the 150 miles from Crieff to Penrith in his native Scotland. More impressively, in 2002, not long after he quit his job with the British Foreign Office, he walked across Afghanistan, a 600-mile jaunt that served as the basis for his best-selling book *The Places In Between*. Indeed, his Afghan adventure was only one leg of a 6,000-mile journey by foot through six Asian countries that took nearly two years to complete.

But these days, Stewart, who's now a professor at Harvard's Kennedy School, doesn't have time for such peregrinations. He's too consumed by the debate over the Obama administration's Afghanistan policy. Stewart went to Capitol Hill in September to testify before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which was just his latest encounter with American policymakers, as he has become a leading—and unlikely—voice for the increasingly popular view that Obama himself once mocked John McCain for espousing: namely, that in Afghanistan, America should just "muddle through."

"It's an administration which has boxed itself in in a range of ways, and I think a lot of it is the president himself," Stewart told me one recent afternoon as he sat in his Harvard office, a spartan space with half-filled bookshelves and an Afghan rug on the floor. "The president has taken the position, at least in his speeches, where the very narrow objective of counterterrorism could only be achieved through an incredibly maximalist comprehensive vision which extends to defeating the Taliban,

David Cowles

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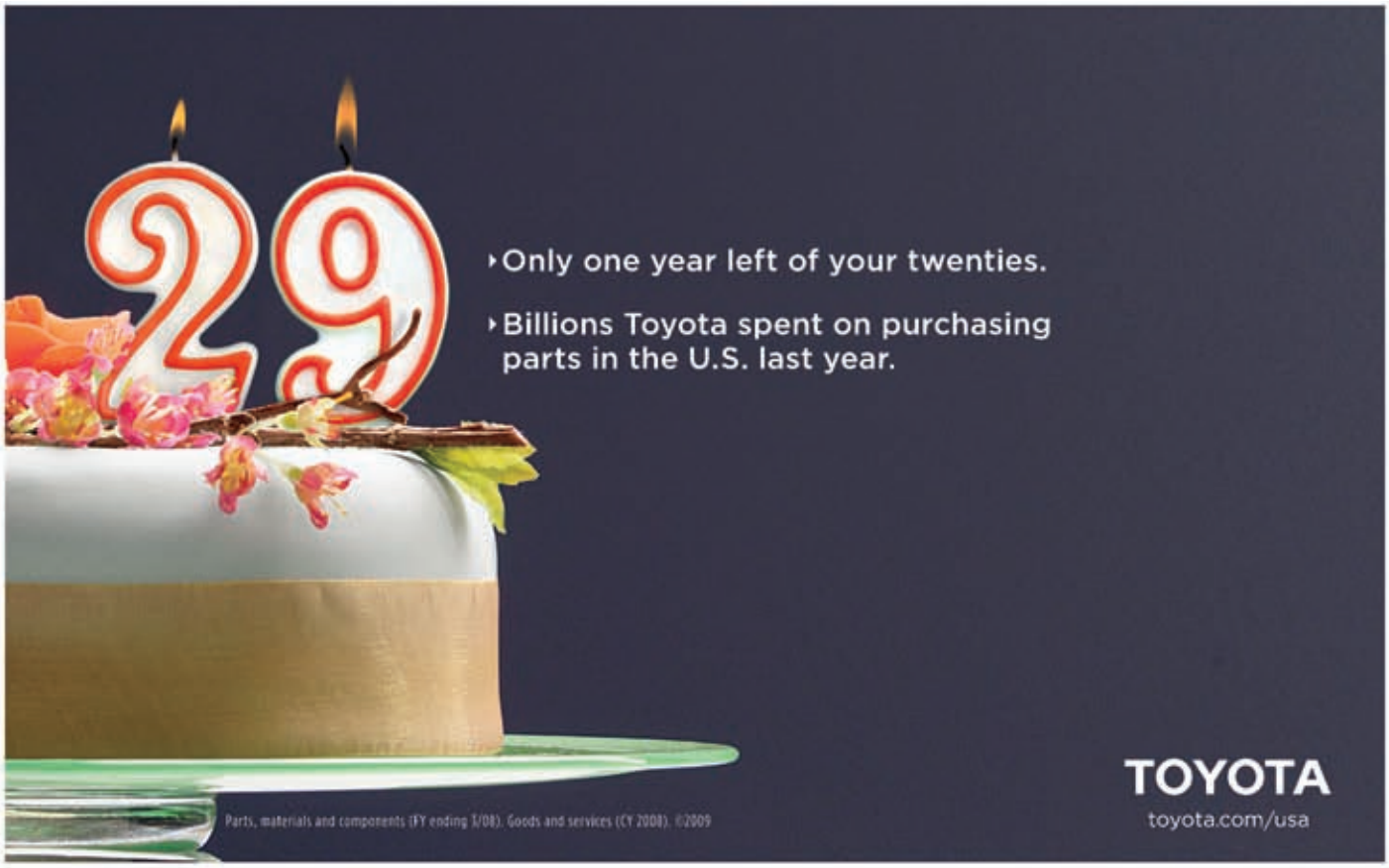
building a legitimate and effective state, stimulating development, stabilizing the region, et cetera." At 36 years old, Stewart, who has long brown hair and the whippet-thin build of a long-distance runner (or, in his case, walker), already has experienced a lifetime's worth of maximalist undertakings. After his walk across Asia, he spent a year working for the Coalition Provisional Authority as the deputy governor of two Iraqi provinces. Today, in addition to teaching Harvard students, he runs a 350-employee NGO in Kabul that's devoted to teaching Afghans traditional crafts skills. The son of a British diplomat, Stewart was raised in Malaysia, where he rafted in rain forests and was taught by his father to box and fence; later, at Eton and then Oxford's Balliol College, he received a traditional British upper-class education steeped in classics, philosophy, economics, and history. Admirers and detractors frequently compare Stewart to T.E. Lawrence (about whom he recently completed a documentary for the BBC), although Stewart himself prefers to think of the nineteenth-century explorer David Livingstone as a better historical analogue.

For additional political coverage by Jason Zengerle and other TNR editors, visit **THE PLANK** *at www.tnr.com*

And yet, for all his obvious ambition, Stewart believes the key to any successful U.S. policy in Afghanistan is modesty. "What muddling through is really about is recognizing that we don't have all the answers," he says. "It's not as if we have some amazing high modernist ideology that we're kind of engineers of the human soul or central planners who are going to come out and create an ideal state. We don't have that ideological certainty, we don't know what we're trying to do, nor do we actually have the power. We don't have the kind of authoritarian weight to impose this on another country. Nor do we have the knowledge." He continues: "In that kind of situation, you're much better off making small, incremental steps which are reversible. You can try something, if that doesn't work, you can back off and try something else."

It's a view Stewart has advocated publicly in articles and interviews and privately in meetings with Hillary Clinton, Richard Holbrooke, and David Petraeus (among others), all of whom have sought out his advice. But, as Stewart and his allies in the Afghanistan policy debate ruefully note, his view has so far failed to move the administration. "He gets talked to a lot," says Michael Cohen, a foreign policy analyst at the New America Foundation, "but no one seems to listen to him." Or, as Stewart put it earlier this year in an interview with the *Financial Times*: "It's like they're coming in and saying to you, 'I'm going to drive my car off a cliff. Should I or should I not wear a seatbelt?' And you say, 'I don't think you should drive your car off the cliff.' And they say, 'No, no, that bit's already been decided—the question is whether to wear a seatbelt.' And you say, 'Well, you might as well wear a seatbelt.' And then they say, 'We've consulted with policy expert Rory Stewart and he says. . . .'"

What would Stewart's version of muddling through in Afghanistan look like? While General Stanley McChrystal's counterinsurgency plan calls for more than 100,000 American troops, and Joe Biden's bare-bones counterterrorism proposal reportedly keeps troop numbers around their current level of 68,000, Stewart believes the foreign-troop presence in Afghanistan should actually be reduced—all the way down to 20,000. Those troops would then be used exclusively to fight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Al Qaeda terrorists; the Taliban would no longer be an enemy. At the same time, while Stewart's plan envisions continued aid to Afghans to support electricity, water, health, education, and agriculture development, the United States would cease with its state-building project and essentially leave the Kabul government to its own devices.

Stewart's plan stems from his strange mixture of pessimism and optimism. On the one hand, he argues that the Afghan central government lacks the strength or legitimacy to actually run the country, nor does he have much faith in the ability of the United States to help it on those counts. "I have some friends in Afghanistan who will say, 'If the U.S. government is infinitely flexible, capable, superbly informed, able to deliver programs precisely in every rural area, and its soldiers are able to avoid killing anybody and can identify exactly which tribal chief at the sub-district level to deal with, everything will be fine,'" Stewart says. "To which my answer is, 'That's a big if, and that's not how our bureaucracies and administrations work.'" But Stewart also believes that things in Afghanistan aren't as precarious as some fear. "There's a certain kind of worst-case scenario view that Afghanistan is like this horrendous nightmare and, if we don't get in there and sort it out, we'll have global jihad, we'll have a completely destabilized region, terrorists will have their hands on Pakistan's nuclear arsenal, American credibility will be finished forever," Stewart says. "And these are not really, I think, fully developed positions."

Rory Stewart is an unlikely spokesman for an Afghanistan policy of "muddling through."

Under a "muddling through" plan, Stewart concedes that the Taliban might take some provincial capitals in Southern Afghanistan, but he believes that the Hazara, Tajik, and Uzbek populations are stronger than they were in 1996 and, thus, would be able to keep the Taliban out of their areas. He also thinks it would take a minimal foreign military presence to prevent the Taliban from marching into Kabul. With the Taliban confined to certain parts of Afghanistan and its ability to exploit the ideology of religious resistance lessened due to the absence of a substantial foreign military presence, the rest of the country would, with substantial foreign assistance, be able to develop. Although his walk across Afghanistan led Stewart to believe that the country is, in some respects, ungovernable, it also gave him great faith in individual Afghans, on whom he depended for food, lodging, and frequently directions. (He didn't carry a detailed map on his trek, since it might have made people think he was a British spy.) "We do consistently overestimate our own capacity and underestimate the capacity of others," he says. "In every case, Afghans are more competent, more canny, more capable than we acknowledge, and we are less so."

Stewart's biggest bugbear is the doctrine of counterinsurgency, which he believes feeds maximalist visions. "I think counterinsurgency has become this very, very funny catchall," he complains. "One of the ways in which it operates ideologically is that it's very, very good at bringing on board humanitarians and academics, because it's always saying it's not just a military solution, or we need to do hearts and minds, we need to look at development, we ought to be cautious as to aerial bombardment. So you get this situation where it neutralizes a lot of criticism. It in fact incorporates an enormous number of people who, in previous interventions or theaters, have been quite critical of military operations." He recalls his recent appearance before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, where he testified alongside two counterinsurgency advocates. "I'm listening to them and I'm thinking, 'You're wrong, but what you're saying sounds very, very smart, and I can see that half these senators are going to be convinced by this, so what on earth can I say now to try to expose the hole in your argument? How am I going to be able to show these senators that, although these guys are incredibly articulate, slick, have all these references to statistics at their fingertips, it's not going to work?'"

Not surprisingly, counterinsurgency advocates have their own problems with Stewart. Andrew Exum, who participated in McChrystal's Afghanistan policy review, is a fan of Stewart's writing and admires his sense of adventure, but questions just how much he really knows about the situation as it currently exists in Afghanistan. "I think the first twenty-two pages of the McChrystal assessment of the war in Afghanistan were more grounded in evidence-based reality than Rory's was," Exum says. "That's not to say he's delusional, just that he has a very limited view of Afghanistan and operations there."

Stewart and his critics do agree on one thing: It's unlikely his proposal will become policy any time soon. Which is why Stewart is thinking longer-term. "What I'm in the game of doing is not changing the president's decision to deploy troops next week," he explains. "What I'm in the business of doing is trying to pitch forward two years, three years time, trying to sense the arc of history" so that, when Afghanistan policy inevitably comes to another crossroads, Stewart's position carries the day. In the meantime, he enjoys teaching his Harvard students to be "states-people," likening his professorship to the job he had back in his Oxford days when he served as the summer tutor to Prince William and Prince Harry. "It can feel, for an Englishman, a little bit like being a Victorian schoolmaster," he says of working at Harvard. "You get the sense that you're teaching classical Greek but they're all going to go out and do whatever they're doing in India." He adds, "It's the perfect kind of teaching

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for a kind of slightly anachronistic person like myself."

But Stewart's time in Cambridge might be short-lived. Although he only arrived at Harvard last year, he's already plotting his exit strategy, as if still searching for a twenty-first-century role to fit his nineteenth-century character. At the moment, he's running for Parliament as a Conservative candidate and, by next May, he could be back in Britain as a member of David Cameron's government. The prospect clearly pleases Stewart. "If I were lucky enough to become the deputy foreign minister or the minister for Afghanistan," he said in his office, as a slightly dreamy tone crept into his voice, "my influence on Afghan policy would be much, much heavier than being a professor at Harvard."

Jason Zengerle

Last Standish

Pete Hoekstra versus the town that would be Gitmo.

A town wants terrorists in its prison, a local pol runs for governor—and the two don't mix.

Standish, Michigan

It's two p.m. on a workday, and the casino parking lot is completely full. Hundreds of people have come for the $20 gambling coupons offered to those willing to donate blood. Turnout for the drive was "above and beyond" expectations, says Frank Cloutier, a spokesman for the Saginaw Chippewa Indians, who run the 800-slot complex. The nurses are already turning people away two hours before closing, and they will soon run out of blood bags.

"We get free money!" one woman tells me, clutching her coupon as her friends nod in agreement. An older gentleman says with less enthusiasm that he only comes once or twice a year. "Just when I'm trying to help pay the light bill," he admits.

Standish, a town of 1,500 people, is the seat of a county with an unemployment rate of nearly 25 percent. It is one of the most impoverished counties in Michigan—the state hit hardest by the recession. In June, two months before my visit, things had gone from bad to worse: Governor Jennifer Granholm announced that the town's main economic engine—the Standish Maximum Correctional Facility, which funds about one-quarter of the city's budget and is the county's largest employer—would be shuttered.

Panic ensued among residents. But on August 2 came the possibility of a lifeline: news from the White House that Standish Max was one of two prisons under consideration for a transfer of inmates from Guantánamo Bay, which President Obama has pledged to close.

Buoyed, local politicians lined up to support the transfer. "First and foremost, our goal is to keep the prison open," Republican State Representative Tim Moore told a House committee. The mayor is on board, as is the outspoken city manager, Michael Moran. "If anybody did escape, they'd have a surprise. We're a community of hunters," said Moran, a former Air Force policeman. Standish's U.S. representative, Democrat Bart Stupak, backs the idea; so do both Michigan senators.

It seemed to be a perfect match—a president in search of a place to send prisoners, a town looking for a way to save its biggest employer. That is, until Pete Hoekstra got involved.

Hoekstra, a Republican, has represented Michigan in Congress since 1993. Born in the Netherlands, the former Fortune 500 executive ousted the incumbent, a longtime National Republican Congressional Committee chair, by riding his bike across Michigan's second district—the most Republican in the state—preaching a populist message.

Seventeen years later—having broken his pledge not to serve more than six terms—Hoekstra is better known for his gaffes than for passing legislation. In 2006, as chairman of the House intelligence committee, he erroneously proclaimed that weapons of mass destruction had been discovered in Iraq. Later that year, *The New York Times* reported that a government website Hoekstra had championed contained detailed information on how to construct a nuclear weapon. On a trip to Iraq earlier this year, he breached protocol by divulging details about the delegation's whereabouts via Twitter.

Ever since Obama announced his intention to close Guantánamo, Hoekstra has led the effort to stop him. In May, he co-sponsored the Keep Terrorists Out Of America Act, which would prohibit the transfer of detainees to any state without the consent of its governor and legislature. "Quite understandably, Americans do not want 240 of the world's most dangerous captured terrorists brought into their neighborhoods," he said in June.

A few months before, Hoekstra had announced that he was giving up his seat to

Anastasia Vasilakis

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run for governor in 2010. While Michigan is considered a blue state, Granholm—a Democrat who is term-limited—isn't terribly popular; and the likely Democratic nominee, Lieutenant Governor John Cherry, is hobbled by her low-30s approval rating. For Hoekstra—already obsessed with the detainee question and needing an issue to raise his profile in the state—the Gitmo-to-Standish news could not have come at a better time.

Hoekstra argued that the move would hurt Michigan economically by dissuading businesses and tourists from coming to the state. He also resorted to old-fashioned fear-mongering. He told the Michigan Senate that a transfer would bring into the state "committed, hard-core radical jihadists who have sworn a religious oath to kill as many Americans as possible." One senator told *The Grand Rapids Press* that the presentation sent "chills down my spine." Local residents "should be scared," Hoekstra told me in a mid-October interview. "They want them all dead!"

Of course, dozens of convicted foreign terrorists—including Zacarias Moussouai, the alleged twentieth hijacker—have been held for years at Colorado's Florence Supermax prison without major incident. Nor has the surrounding community suffered economically, according to both a county official and the head of the Florence Chamber of Commerce. When ten former military and national security officials sent Hoekstra a letter criticizing him for "stirring up panic and distorting reality for political purposes," Hoekstra's spokesman dismissed it as the "opinions of a bunch of out-of-state Democrat contributors and partisans" (though the mix of signatories was bipartisan). Hoekstra has been equally dismissive of the effect the closure of Standish Max would have on the surrounding area. "This is not a local community decision, excuse me," he told the *Detroit Free Press* on August 2. "This is a national security decision."

Dave Munson is a soft-spoken tavern owner from Standish—and an unlikely organizer for the "anti-Gitmo" rally being held at Resurrection of the Lord Church. Back in June, Munson had actually traveled to Washington to convince Michigan politicians to consider a detainee transfer as a way to save Standish Max. It appears, however, that the lobbyist was lobbied: Munson ran into Hoekstra at a cocktail party and left a convert. Munson is cryptic about his change of heart, telling me that Hoekstra is "privy to certain information." (Munson was more candid with *The Washington Post*: "He told me things that really scared the heck out of me.") Today, Hoekstra is headlining Munson's event.

About 200 people have showed up; some are activists who drove hundreds of miles to attend. Hoekstra, after an introduction from Munson, begins by saying, "I'm not here as a candidate." He then quickly launches into his usual talking points about the detainees. "I think that there's information I may have access to that I believe the state of Michigan should have access to, that [local leaders] should have access to, that the people of this community should have access to"—but that the federal government is keeping secret. (He later tells me the Obama administration is "more secretive than Cheney.") Hoekstra spends much of the meeting arguing that national security ought to trump local self-interest. Taking the prisoners, he argues, would be like accepting the "40 pieces of silver" Roman authorities gave Judas to betray Jesus. (It was actually 30 pieces.)

The speakers who follow Hoekstra spend most of their time invoking scenes of terrorists hurling bodily fluids, taking schoolchildren hostage, and detonating a bomb in this church. "You folks are the soft targets," says Debra Burlingame, whose brother piloted the plane that crashed into the Pentagon on September 11. "If they are brought here and a federal judge orders them to be released, where do you think they're going to go?" Brent Snelgrove, a Standish businessman, stands up to confront the speakers. "I'm disappointed in this panel," he says, calling their words "almost hysteria."

A decision from the administration isn't expected until next month. But on September 28, a Fox News item cited an administration official claiming that Standish Max was no longer being considered. Though the claim was countered by federal officials, Hoekstra told *The Detroit News* that he was "ninety-five percent convinced" it was true, based on conversations his staffers had with Pentagon officials. "The word we're getting through back channels . . . is that it's unlikely that these folks are gonna come to Standish," he told me.

If the detainees aren't transferred, and Hoekstra is able to claim credit for keeping them out, it will no doubt be a boon to his gubernatorial bid. And the struggling people of Standish? There is always the chance they will get lucky at the casino.

Chris Bodenner

Chris Bodenner is a staff editor at TheAtlantic.com.

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End State

Is California finished?

JOHN B. JUDIS

California has always been a dreamer's paradise. But has paradise finally been lost?

Oakland, California

California is a mess, but I love it all the same—especially the Bay Area, where I lived for 15 years. I went to Berkeley in 1962—a refugee from Amherst College, which at that time was dominated by frat boys with high SAT scores. I didn't go to Berkeley to go to school, but to be a bus ride away from North Beach and the Jazz Workshop. In a broader sense, I went to California for the same reason that other émigrés had been going since the 1840s. I was knocking on the Golden Door.

Immigrants from Europe had come to America seeking happiness and a break with their unhappy pasts. But many Americans—from the '49ers of the Gold Rush to Mark Twain to a young Ronald Reagan—had gone to California to find renewal. California was part of the American frontier, but, as Carey McWilliams points out in *California: The Great Exception*, it developed outside the framework of the American frontier. It was not an extension of the East or Midwest, but became a state in 1850 before other Western states. It was an island in the sun without Pilgrim winters or windswept prairies. It nourished its own dream of wealth and well-being. It was the American dream all over again, but dreamt within America.

California has fulfilled many of those dreams. It has extended and enhanced the promise of America—from the discovery of gold to the introduction of the movies and television, the aerospace industry, Silicon Valley, and the Central Valley's giant farms that supply a quarter of America's food. It has also been a political and cultural vanguard—from John C. Fremont, the first presidential candidate of the anti-slavery Republican Party, to Progressive Governor Hiram Johnson, Socialist Upton Sinclair, old-age-pension agitator Francis Townsend, and down to Richard Nixon, Earl Warren, and Reagan. The New Left staged its first mass protests in Berkeley. Gay rights came out of Los Angeles and San Francisco. And the New Right was spurred by California's tax revolt and by the backlash against illegal immigration.

John Hersey

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I was drawn to California by Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, but, by the time I arrived, the era of the beatniks was over. The Caffé Trieste had become a tourist hangout. Still, within a few years, I was trekking to the Fillmore to hear the Grateful Dead, living in sin, smoking pot, and marching against racial discrimination and the Vietnam war. That heady period, marked by the Free Speech Movement and Haight-Ashbury, faded by the early 1970s, but it helped inspire the rise of Apple, the personal computer, the movement for open-source software, and, later, the virtual community of the Internet and the dot-coms. (This is not some oddball observation of mine: It's documented in Steven Levy's book *Hackers* and in John Markoff's *What the Dormouse Said: How the 60s Counterculture Shaped the Personal Computer*.)

But could California's days as a politico-cultural vanguard and economic bellwether be coming to an end? The state has endured swings and has come back better than ever. Writing in 1949, with unemployment at 14 percent, McWilliams questioned whether California exceptionalism had finally come to an end, but, with the onset of the cold war, Southern California benefited from an aerospace boom. Again, in the early 1990s, California seemed to be falling into a black hole: Cutbacks in military spending decimated the state's defense industries, and, by the end of 1992, unemployment was 9.9 percent, 2.5 points higher than the national rate; that year, Kemper Securities rated California's economy fifty-first in investment prospects among the 50 states and the District of Columbia. But the growth of dot-coms, a global entertainment industry, and biotech led its rebound.

Last month, California's unemployment rate hit 12.2 percent, a 70-year high. Its bond rating is the lowest of the 50 states. Earlier, the state government had to issue IOUs. Its political system—once the envy of other states—has become dysfunctional. And its educational system, which former University of California president Clark Kerr described as "bait to be dangled in front of industry," is riven by conflict and reeling from budget cuts. Is this déjà vu all over again, or has the California dream finally become a nightmare? There are troubling signs.

I'm not big on traveling, but when I get a chance to visit California, I take it. Last month, I traveled back west as a guest of Stanford's Hoover Institution to attend a conference on educational reform. Education's not a specialty of mine, but I hoped that studying California's tarnished system, which was once the jewel in the state's crown, would provide a window into what is happening in the state. I was not disappointed.

When I first went to California, its elementary and high schools were thought to be among the nation's best. The schools were generously endowed—the fifth-highest in spending per pupil among the states—and about half of California's high school graduates went to college, compared with less than one-third in the rest of the nation. And Kerr and Governor Pat Brown were determined to go further.

The bald, bespectacled Kerr, a labor economist, had a stormy tenure as university president—he was denounced by students as a technocrat who wanted to turn the university into a service center for the military-industrial complex, and by conservatives for refusing to crack down on the student rebels—but he turns out to have been one of the country's great educators. The Master Plan he devised in 1960 for California's higher education, which Brown got the legislature to adopt, represented a high-water mark of American progressivism and of the California dream. Kerr's idea was that every Californian who graduated from high school should be able to attend college. High school graduates in the top 12.5 percent of their class were to be admitted to the university system, headed by Berkeley and UCLA. Students in the top third could go to one of the state colleges, and any graduate could gain admission to a community college from which, after graduation, he or she could transfer easily to a four-year college. Community college was virtually free, and the state universities charged very modest fees—$80 per semester when I attended Berkeley. (We of the New Left objected to the tracking implicit in Kerr's system—we insisted, in effect, that everyone should be able to go to Berkeley—but we had a vision of America that bore no resemblance to existing reality.)

That system, which was emulated by other states, has fallen into disrepair. California now ranks seventeenth of the 20 largest states in the percentage of ninth-graders who go to college—36.3 percent compared with a 41.8 percent national average and 58.2 percent in Minnesota. And it ranks eighteenth among the 20 largest states in the percentage of high school graduates who go directly to college. The problem comes partly from the state government's abandonment of the community college system: Community colleges receive about $5,500 in fees and state funding for each student each year, while the universities get $22,000 and the state colleges $12,000. But the heart of the problem lies in California's K-12 education: According to the Department of Education's National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tests, California eighth-graders came in forty-eighth in 2007 among the 50 states and District of Columbia in reading and forty-fifth in math.

At the conference at Stanford, members of Hoover's Task Force on K-12 Education tried to explain why schools in California and elsewhere were performing poorly. The experts generally blamed bad teaching and the refusal of the teachers' unions to do anything about it. They want to improve the teaching through evaluations that weed out bad teachers, through merit pay to reward good ones, and by paying extra to teachers willing to teach in problematic schools. They also want to use school choice and, in some cases, vouchers, and the establishment of charter schools to pressure poorly performing schools. (With support from Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger has advanced a set of proposals along these lines.) For many reformers, everything begins and ends with bad teachers and union obstinacy.

At the gathering, held in a plush conference room, one of the experts projected tables and graphs comparing various states. It was there that I had my own "AHA!" moment. The states with thriving educational systems were generally northern, predominately white, and with relatively few immigrants: the New England states, North Dakota, and Minnesota. That bore out the late Senator Patrick Moynihan's quip that the strongest factor in predicting SAT scores was proximity to the Canadian border. The states grouped with California on the lower end of the bar graph were Deep South states like Mississippi and Alabama with a legacy of racism and with a relative absence of new-economy jobs; states like West Virginia that have relatively few jobs for college grads; and states like Nevada, New Mexico, and Hawaii that have huge numbers of non-English-speaking, downscale immigrants whose children are entering the schools. California clearly falls into the last group, suggesting that California's poor performance since the 1960s may not have been due to an influx of bad teachers, or the rise of teachers' unions, but to the growth of the state's immigrant population after the 1965 federal legislation on immigration opened the gates.

In California, one in four students has to learn English in school, while the average in the United States is less than one in ten. Half of California students

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are eligible for free or reduced meals. Together, almost 60 percent of California's school population is made up of Hispanics, many of them low-income, and African Americans—groups that generally have a much lower rate of student achievement than whites, Asians, and upper-income students. (One in three Latinos fails to graduate from high school.) And that affects how well schools do in the Department of Education's measure of "Adequate Yearly Progress" (AYP). As the nonpartisan Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) reports: "Fifty percent of elementary schools with the highest share of low-income students made AYP in 2007, whereas 98 percent of elementary schools with the lowest share of low-income students made AYP. This suggests that AYP reveals more about the type of students who attend a school than it does about the effectiveness of teachers and administrators at that school."

This is not to say that exceptional teachers can't make a difference. It is also not to say that non-English-speaking immigrant kids are unteachable. But they are more difficult to teach, especially when their parents aren't high school graduates. And, without an extraordinary infusion of resources, as well as active and knowledgeable support from parents, their achievement levels are likely to bring down a state's bar graph. Leaving the parental question aside, California does not put extraordinary resources into teaching these kids. California is thirtieth among states in the amount it spends per student. It is forty-ninth in student-teacher ratios. It is fifty-first for guidance counselors and libraries. The reformers' proposals certainly might help, but

California trails almost every state in student-teacher ratios, guidance counselors, and libraries.

to succeed at all, the teachers will need guidance counselors, special-ed experts, and librarians, too.

The education reformers also tend to ignore the question of what kinds of jobs will ultimately be available to California students who get through high school and college. When Clark Kerr designed the Master Plan, he could imagine a steady progression of income and occupation from day laborer to industrial worker to white-collar professional to manager. And school reformers still buy into this dream. But California's workforce has become highly segmented between low-wage service, construction, and farm labor at the bottom and white-collar professionals and managers at the top; and that segmentation of the workforce is reflected in the schools and colleges.

Yes, only 30 percent of the state's 19-year-olds are now in college, but, if you look at the jobs that California's Employment Development Department thinks will be available over the next decade, the greatest numbers by far are among those that require *short-term on-the-job training*—retail sales, cashiers, waiters, clerks, home care aides, and laborers—many of which pay less than $10 per hour. All that college prep seems pretty useless if it's not going to pay off in the job market.

Surely there are problems within California's schools. But the underlying problem that must ultimately be addressed is the segmented structure of California's economy that creates its own tracking system along the lines of income, race, and nationality within the schools. More than anything, that is what has been holding back the realization of Clark Kerr's dream for California.

READ THE PUNDITS about California's economy, and you'll learn it is "collapsing," a "wreck," and indicative of a "failed state." This is the same kind of language one hears about Michigan or Pakistan. It's good theatrics and probably sells newspapers or magazines, but it's bad economics.

There are places in California's Central Valley, and in the exurbs where Countrywide, Wachovia, and IndyMac sold subprime mortgages, that look like downriver Detroit, but, in Menlo Park and in Oakland's Rockridge area, where I stayed during my recent visit, there were few visible signs of trouble. That's because, like its educational system, California's economy is pretty much divided in two.

California's unemployment rate *is* over 12 percent, higher than Ohio or West Virginia, but that can be a misleading figure. Since the 1970s, California's rate of unemployment has always been higher than the national average during recessions. According to the PPIC, that's because "California's labor force grows faster than the U.S. labor force. The state's economy, therefore, generates jobs at a rate similar to the national rate, but this is not enough to keep up with California's faster growing population."

What's important are the huge disparities between regions. The unemployment rate in Silicon Valley's San Mateo County is 9.2 percent, less than the national average, and unemployment is even lower around Santa Barbara or in Marin County. But it is 15.7 percent in the Stockton area, 16.7 percent in Merced, and a whopping 28.7 percent in Imperial County near the Mexican border—heavily Hispanic areas dependent on agriculture and home construction. The disparities in these figures largely reflect what is produced in those areas and who lives there.

The disparities also reflect the skewed growth in California's economy, which, in the future, could exacerbate the differences between peoples and regions. Far from "collapsing," California's economy currently boasts some of the country's leading-edge industries, including computer and telecommunication hardware and software, biotechnology, alternative energy, entertainment (one of the country's biggest exports), and aerospace technology. These industries provide high wages and help pay for state government. But except, perhaps, for alternative energy, they're different from the industries that triggered California's earlier booms. They enjoy extremely high rates of productivity, which means they increase their output without creating millions of new jobs. From 2001 to 2007, California's information industries increased their output by 21 percent, but *lost* 6.9 percent of their jobs. In addition, the jobs these high-tech industries tend to create directly are high-wage jobs that require advanced degrees, while the jobs they create indirectly are low-wage service-sector jobs at homes, restaurants, offices, and hospitals. So, by their nature, they exacerbate the segmentation of California's economy.

In the past, immigrant farm laborers or roofers or grocery clerks could hope that their children would work their way up the occupational ladder—perhaps by getting a well-paid job in California's auto or aircraft industry. But, for the last two decades, these kinds of middle-income jobs in manufacturing and office work have been disappearing in the state. A study by California's Legislative Analyst's Office found that, between 1989 and 1998, California lost more than 100,000 of these jobs, while gaining about 700,000 jobs in low-wage services. That trend has continued during the last decade: Between May 2000 and May 2009, California lost 28.7 percent of its manufacturing jobs.

Meanwhile, the income gap between professionals and managers and low-income service and farmworkers in California has grown. From 1993 to 2007, the share in total income of the top 1 percent earners went from 13.8 percent to 25.2 percent. The wealthiest 20 percent of Californians have average incomes 7.9 times higher than those of the poorest

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20 percent. That's the eighth-largest spread among states.

Worse still, the divide in income and occupation, like the divide in educational attainment, breaks along racial and national lines. Hispanics make up 67.9 percent of California's farmworkers. Immigrant non-citizens—most of them Hispanic—accounted for 51 percent of California's farmworkers, 32.4 percent of its construction laborers, 25.7 percent of its leisure and hospitality workers, and 27.2 percent of its manufacturing workforce. African Americans are also disproportionately represented in lower-level service and production occupations. A PPIC study in 2003 found that the income of black males relative to white males fell from 81 cents on the dollar in 1993 to 74 cents in 2003.

As Peter Schrag recounts in *California: America's High Stakes Experiment*, the California dream has always had its dark side—from the discrimination against the Chinese in the late nineteenth century to the "battering" the Okies took during the Depression to the "push-pull-love-hate relationship with Mexicans." What is distinctive about the present situation, however, is that the dark side of the California dream encompasses population groups that will soon make up the majority of its citizens.

Sharp ethnic and racial divides of this kind don't necessarily undermine an economy. On the contrary, California's success in agriculture was based on cheap immigrant labor. But it's a recipe for social and political unrest—and even riot and rebellion. And it's a betrayal of the American, as well as the California, dream. That's something California's government will need to address, but there's the question of whether it is capable of doing so.

I CAME TO California during the 1962 gubernatorial campaign, when Democrat Pat Brown repelled Richard Nixon's first political comeback bid. Brown's achievement eluded me at the time; he seemed mostly like a weak, bumbling politician who acquiesced in the execution of Caryl Chessman. But Brown was largely responsible for California's replacing New York as the country's most populous and most influential state. He built roads, bridges, schools, and universities. He believed, his daughter later recalled, "in the absolute destiny of California to grow."

But if California has grown in recent decades, it has been in spite of, and without the guidance of, the state government. California has certainly had the wealth to fund its schools, rebuild its infrastructure, and give its immigrants the economic security they need to strive for better things, but it has been stymied—in booms as well as busts—by a political system that can't respond to California's new economy in a way that would encourage growth and reduce inequality. California needs the kind of innovative approach that Brown and Kerr devised, but, instead, it has gotten protracted budget battles dominated by short-sighted political factionalism.

The biggest reason for this paralysis is the radicalization of California's Republican Party. By now, this is a familiar part of the American political landscape. But it all began in California. When Brown took office, California politics was still dominated by liberal Democrats and progressive Republicans. By the mid-1960s, conservative Republicans, fueled by the backlash against the civil rights movement, the campus rebellion, and the counterculture, began to oust Republican progressives. In the 1966 gubernatorial

California boasts some of the country's leading-edge industries, which, by their nature, will exacerbate the economy's segmentation.

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Arabian Fables (I)

How the Arabs soften up world opinion with fanciful myths.

Josef Goebbels, the infamous propaganda minister of the Nazis, had it right. Just tell people big lies often enough and they will believe them. The Arabs have learned that lesson well. They have swayed world opinion by endlessly repeating myths and lies that have no basis in fact.

What are the facts?

The "Palestinians." That is the fundamental myth. The reality is that the concept of "Palestinians" is one that did not exist until about 1948, when the Arab inhabitants of what until then was Palestine, wished to differentiate themselves from the Jews. Until then, the Jews were the Palestinians. There was the Palestinian Brigade of Jewish volunteers in the British World War II Army (at a time when the Palestinian Arabs were in Berlin hatching plans with Adolf Hitler for world conquest and how to kill all the Jews); there was the Palestinian Symphony Orchestra (all Jews, of course); there was The Palestine Post, and so much more.

The Arabs, who now call themselves "Palestinians," do so in order to persuade a misinformed world that they are a distinct nationality and that "Palestine" is their ancestral homeland. But, of course, they are no distinct nationality at all. They are entirely the same — in language, customs, and tribal ties — as the Arabs of Syria, Jordan, and beyond. There is no more difference between the "Palestinians" and the other Arabs of those countries than there is between, say, the citizens of Minnesota and of Wisconsin.

What's more, many of the "Palestinians," or their immediate ancestors, came to the area attracted by the prosperity created by the Jews, in what previously had been pretty much of a wasteland.

The nationhood of the "Palestinians" is a myth.

The "West Bank." Again, this is a concept that did not exist until 1948, when the army of the Kingdom of Transjordan, together with five other Arab armies, invaded the Jewish state of Israel, on the very day of its creation.

In what can almost be described as a Biblical miracle, the ragtag Jewish forces defeated the combined Arab might. But Transjordan stayed in possession of the territories of Judea and Samaria and part of the city of Jerusalem. The Jordanians promptly expelled all Jews from the area that they occupied, destroyed all Jewish institutions and houses of worship, used Jewish cemetery headstones to build military latrines, and renamed as "West Bank" what had been Judea and Samaria since time immemorial.

The attempt, quite successful, was to persuade an uninformed world that these territories were ancestral parts of the Jordanian Arab Kingdom (itself a very recent creation of British power diplomacy). Even after the total rout of the Arabs in the 1967 Six-Day War, in which the Jordanians were driven out of Judea/Samaria and of Jerusalem, they and the world continued to call this territory the "West Bank", a geographical concept that cannot be found on any except the most recent maps.

> "The web of lies and myths that the Arab propaganda machine has created plays an important role in the unrelenting quest to destroy the State of Israel. What a shame that the world has accepted most of it!"

The concept of the "West Bank" is a myth.

The "Occupied Territories." After the victorious Six-Day War, during which the Israeli army defeated the same cabal of Arabs that had invaded the country in 1948, Israel remained in possession of Judea/Samaria (now renamed "West Bank"), which the Jordanians had illegally occupied for 19 years; of the Gaza strip, which had been occupied by the Egyptians but which (hundreds of miles from Egypt proper) had never been part of their country; and of the Golan Heights, a plateau of about 400 square miles, which, though originally part of Palestine, had been ceded to Syria by British-French agreement.

The last sovereign in Judea/Samaria and in Gaza was the British mandatory power — and before it was the Ottoman Empire. All of Palestine, including what is now the Kingdom of Jordan, was, by the Balfour Declaration, destined to be the Jewish National Home. How then could the Israelis be "occupiers" in their own territory? Who would be the sovereign and who the rightful inhabitants?

The concept of "occupied territories" in reference to Judea/Samaria (often called the "West Bank") and Gaza is another of the many myths created by Arab propaganda.

Unable so far to destroy Israel on the battlefield — though they are feverishly preparing for their next assault — the Arabs are now trying to overcome and destroy Israel by their acknowledged "policy of stages". That policy is to get as much land as possible carved out of Israel "by peaceful and diplomatic" means, so as to make Israel indefensible and softened up for the final assault. The web of lies and myths that the Arab propaganda machine has created plays an important role in the unrelenting quest to destroy the State of Israel. What a shame that the world has accepted most of it!

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primary, Reagan took out San Francisco Mayor George Christopher; and, in 1968, right-wing firebrand Max Rafferty—notorious for wanting to ban books from school libraries—defeated liberal Republican Thomas Kuchel in the Republican Senate primary. That set the stage for the conservative takeover of the California party. Some moderates remain, but they find themselves embattled within their own party.

By itself, this Republican shift to the right didn't lead to political paralysis. It had to be combined with the political rules that Californians have adopted over the last century. These rules, beginning with the introduction of the initiative and referendum in 1911, were generally adopted in order to make the state more responsive to voters. But, over time, they have led to a system in which a determined minority can defy the majority. In 1933, Californians adopted a two-thirds requirement for passing budget increases over 5 percent. Then, in 1978, as part of the infamous Proposition 13, Californians adopted a rigid two-thirds requirement on tax increases, but not reductions. That meant that a one-third minority of the legislature could block any spending or tax increases.

Under Pat Brown, or even under Reagan, a former labor negotiator who enjoyed the give-and-take of political compromise, the budget restriction meant little, but, in the last few decades, the polarization of the parties, combined with the two-thirds requirements, has paralyzed California politics. Except for 1995–1996, Democrats have controlled the state legislature, but they have not enjoyed a two-thirds majority. That has meant that a conservative Republican caucus, opposed to *any* tax increase and demanding spending cuts (except in programs that directly benefit its business supporters or constituents), has had inordinate power over budget decisions.

This year, the Republicans, who have only 35 percent of the seats in the Assembly and 37.5 percent in the Senate, held up the budget bill for months until the state was forced in July to issue IOUs for state services. They objected to tax increases on cigarettes and a tax on oil extraction (which were later removed) and measures to improve tax enforcement on businesses (which were also removed). They demanded cuts in social services (which they got) and in transportation (which they didn't). The Democrats were able to block a measure to allow oil drilling off the Santa Barbara coast—the scene of a disastrous oil spill in 1969—but, all in all, the budget shredded the state's safety net, including spending on health care for poor children, and took an ax to California's community colleges and state colleges, reducing enrollment at the latter by 300,000. Political scientist Bruce Cain told *The Wall Street Journal* after the budget battle was over that the Republicans "have realized Reagan's vision of a smaller state and local government. They forced [Democrats] to make very deep cuts in services, to schools and to state salaries and state benefits." And that at a time when, if anything, California's budget needs to grow to make up for losses in private investment and revenues.

Republican as well as Democratic governors have fared poorly under this political system (see "Failed State," September 5, 2005). Republican Pete Wilson tried to govern from the political center with the Democrats, infuriating his own party, and probably would have been denied reelection in 1994 if he had not decided to reverse his stand and champion Proposition 187, which was ostensibly directed at illegal immigrants but played on broader hostility to Hispanic immigration. Wilson's successor Gray Davis was recalled and replaced in 2003 by Schwarzenegger, who has endured a succession of bitter budget battles in which he has tried to buck his own party. Schwarzenegger, who first won office on a vain promise to reform California politics, has ended up with an approval rating of 27 percent. Wilson, Gray, and Schwarzenegger each suffered from the absence of a vital center in California politics.

The state's next governor will face intractable problems: polarized parties, a deadlocked legislature, and an anti-democratic political culture.

Five major candidates are currently running to succeed Schwarzenegger. The three Republicans—former eBay CEO Meg Whitman, former Representative Tom Campbell, and Insurance Commissioner Steve Poizner—are pro-choice Silicon Valley Republicans who have survived the party's trend to the right, but who in campaigning have been forced to repudiate or downplay their pasts. If the charismatic Schwarzenegger failed to carve out a new centrism, they are even less likely to succeed.

The two Democrats are Jerry Brown, the former governor and current state attorney general, and San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom. Brown, who is well-known around the state, is currently favored to win the primary and the election. As someone who lived in California when Brown was governor, I worry about his reincarnation. Brown's first two years in office in 1975–1976 were notable for his support of environmental regulation and of collective bargaining for farm workers, but later, he failed to anticipate Proposition 13 and, when it passed, embraced it as if he had favored it all along. Fourteen years later, he was running for president as a champion of a flat tax.

In *The New York Review of Books* in June 1976, Garry Wills wrote the best article yet on Brown. Titled "Anti-Papa Politics," it described how Brown had fashioned his own "era of limits," creating a "small is beautiful" politics in contradiction to his father's politics of growth. But what California needs now is not the negation of Pat Brown, but an attempt to adapt his energetic approach to government to a new California. Perhaps his son is the man to do it. Children often come around in their twilight years to the ways of their fathers. In any case, whoever succeeds Schwarzenegger is going to be faced with the same problems that he and past governors have faced: polarized parties, a deadlocked legislature, and a populace that, schooled in the initiative and referendum, is committed to a plebiscitary political culture that discourages democratic deliberation.

California remains America's state, but it also registers the state of America. It is the repository of America's dreams and fantasies, and it is integral to the country's wealth and prosperity, as well as the growing inequality they have fostered. To realize the California dream for a new generation—and to do it in a way that touches not just Menlo Park and Santa Barbara, but also Fresno and Modesto—California needs a new Master Plan, one that repairs its tattered educational system and reshapes its segmented economy. But it can't do that without a far-sighted government that can transcend faction and interest.

To be sure, California has defied its prophets of doom before, recreating and renewing itself. As someone who knocked on the Golden Door in an earlier era, I hope it does so again—for the country's sake as well as California's. But I have my doubts. ◆

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Daniel Behar

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The Front

The Taliban–Al Qaeda merger.

PETER BERGEN

On July 25, Najibullah Zazi, a lanky man in his mid-twenties, walked into the Beauty Supply Warehouse in Aurora, Colorado, a suburb of Denver. The visit was captured on a store video camera. Wearing a baseball cap and pushing a shopping cart, Zazi appeared to be just another suburban guy.

Of course, not many suburban guys buy six bottles of Clairoxide hair bleach, as Zazi did on this shopping trip—or return a month later to buy a dozen bottles of "Ms. K Liquid," a peroxide-based product. Aware that these were hardly the typical purchases of a heavily bearded, dark-haired young man, Zazi—who was born in Afghanistan and spent part of his childhood in Pakistan before moving to the United States at the age of 14—kibitzed easily with the counter staff, joking that he had to buy such large quantities of hair products because he "had a lot of girlfriends."

In fact, the government believes that Zazi, a onetime coffee-cart operator on Wall Street and shuttle-van driver at the Denver airport, was planning what could have been the deadliest terrorist attack in the United States since September 11. Prior to his arrest last month, the FBI discovered pages of handwritten notes on his laptop detailing how to turn common, store-bought chemicals into bombs. If proven guilty, Zazi would be the first genuine Al Qaeda recruit discovered in the United States in the past few years.

The novel details of the case were sobering. Few Americans, after all, were expecting to be terrorized by an Al Qaeda agent wielding hair dye. But it was perhaps the least surprising fact about Zazi that was arguably the most consequential: where he is said to have trained.

In August 2008, prosecutors allege, Zazi traveled to Pakistan's tribal regions and studied explosives with Al Qaeda members. If that story sounds familiar, it should: Nearly every major jihadist plot against Western targets in the last two decades somehow leads back to Afghanistan or Pakistan. The first World Trade Center bombing in 1993 was masterminded by Ramzi Yousef, who had trained in an Al Qaeda camp on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. Ahmed Ressam, who plotted to blow up LAX airport in 1999, was trained in Al Qaeda's Khaldan camp in Afghanistan. Key operatives in the suicide attacks on two U.S. embassies in Africa in 1998 and the *USS Cole* in 2000 trained in Afghanistan; so did all 19 September 11 hijackers. The leader of the 2002 Bali attack that killed more than 200 people, mostly Western tourists, was a veteran of the Afghan camps. The ringleader of the 2005 London subway bombing was trained by Al Qaeda in Pakistan. The British plotters who planned to blow up passenger planes leaving Heathrow in the summer of 2006 were taking direction from Pakistan; a July 25, 2006, e-mail from their Al Qaeda handler in that country, Rashid Rauf, urged them to "get a move on." If that attack had succeeded, as many as 1,500 would have died. The three men who, in 2007, were planning to attack Ramstein Air Base, a U.S. facility in Germany, had trained in Pakistan's tribal regions.

And yet, as President Obama weighs whether to send more troops to Afghanistan, the connection between the region and Al Qaeda has suddenly become a matter of hot dispute in Washington. We are told that September 11 was as much a product of plotting in Hamburg as in Afghanistan; that Al Qaeda and the Taliban are quite distinct groups, and that we can therefore defeat the former while tolerating the latter; that flushing jihadists out of one failing state will merely cause them to pop up in another anarchic corner of the globe; that, in the age of the Internet, denying terrorists a physical safe haven isn't all it's cracked up to be.

These arguments point toward one conclusion: The effort to secure Afghanistan is not a matter of vital U.S. interest. But those who make this case could not be more mistaken. Afghanistan and the areas of Pakistan that border it have always been the epicenter of the war on jihadist terrorism—and, at least for the foreseeable future, they will continue to be. Though it may be tempting to think otherwise, we cannot defeat Al Qaeda without securing Afghanistan.

A young Osama bin Laden first arrived in the region around 1980 to wage jihad against the Soviets; he would spend most of his adult life in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Al Qaeda leaders have, since the '80s, developed deep relationships with key Taliban commanders based along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, such as Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and members of the Haqqani family. Bin Laden's deputy, Ayman Al Zawahiri, has even married into a local tribe.

It is true that, before September 11, some Taliban leaders opposed bin Laden's presence in Afghanistan on the grounds that it was interfering with their quest for international recognition. And it is also true that Taliban foot soldiers today are fighting for any number of reasons—ranging from cash payments, to tribal opposition to the government, to a hatred of foreigners.

But, in recent years, Taliban leaders have drawn especially close to Al Qaeda. (There are basically two branches of the Taliban—Pakistani and Afghan—but both are currently headquartered in Pakistan, and they are quite a bit more interwoven than is commonly thought.) Today, at the leadership level, the Taliban and Al Qaeda function more or less as a single entity. The signs of this are everywhere. For instance, IED attacks in Afghanistan have increased dramatically since 2004. What happened? As a Taliban member told Sami Yousafzai and Ron Moreau of *Newsweek*, "The Arabs taught us how to make an IED by mixing nitrate fertilizer and diesel fuel and how to pack plastic explosives and to connect them to detonators and remote-control devices like mobile phones. We learned how to do this blindfolded so we could safely plant IEDs in the dark." Another explained that "Arab and Iraqi mujahedin began visiting us, transferring the latest IED technology and suicide-bomber tactics they had learned in the Iraqi resistance." Small numbers of Al Qaeda instructors embedded with much

Defeat Al Qaeda without securing Afghanistan? It can't be done.

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larger Taliban units have functioned something like U.S. Special Forces do—as trainers and force multipliers.

Meanwhile, the Taliban, like Al Qaeda, has tried to attack the West. According to Spanish prosecutors, the late and unlamented leader of the Pakistani Taliban, Baitullah Mehsud, dispatched suicide bombers on a botched mission to Barcelona in January 2008. Pakistani Taliban spokesman Maulvi Omar confirmed this in August during a videotaped interview in which he said that those bombers "were under pledge to Baitullah Mehsud." The point is not that the Taliban is going to mount a widespread campaign of terrorism in the West—it isn't—but simply that the Taliban's approach to combat has increasingly merged with Al Qaeda's.

The Taliban has borrowed more than just violent techniques from bin Laden's group. The Pakistani Taliban has an active video-propaganda operation that mimics Al Qaeda's video wing. In fact, the output of the two is often interchangeable—indicating that Taliban and Al Qaeda operations are conducted jointly. Ben Venzke of IntelCenter, a government contractor that closely monitors jihadist propaganda, reports that "a growing number of Pakistani Taliban people are showing up in Al Qaeda productions."

One of the key leaders of the Afghan Taliban as it surged in strength in 2006 was Mullah Dadullah, a thuggish but effective commander who was quite upfront about his close links to Al Qaeda. "Osama bin Laden, thank God, is alive and in good health," he told CBS in December 2006. "We are in contact with his top aides and sharing plans and operations with each other." Dadullah would later claim that bin Laden himself had supervised a Taliban suicide operation targeting Dick Cheney during his visit to Afghanistan in February 2007.

This summer, Mustafa Abu Al Yazid, one of Al Qaeda's founders and a current member of its leadership council, described his group's rapport with the Taliban during an interview with Al Jazeera in Afghanistan. "We are on a good and strong relationship with them," he explained, "and we frequently meet them." He also said that his organization continues to regard Mullah Omar as the "Commander of the Faithful"—in effect acknowledging that the Taliban leader is Al Qaeda's religious guide, a position he has enjoyed for the past decade.

The admiration is apparently mutual. For around a year now, the Saudis have been facilitating backdoor negotiations between the Afghan government and more moderate elements of the Taliban. A senior Saudi official privy to those negotiations told me that Mullah Omar has never rejected Al Qaeda.

But wouldn't the Taliban change its tune if it returned to power? Wouldn't Mullah Omar and his allies become deterrable in the same way that leaders of most other states are deterrable—and realize it is in their interest to drop Al Qaeda? This idea has been advanced by, among others, Harvard professor Stephen Walt, who wrote in August: "While it is true that Mullah Omar gave Osama bin Laden a sanctuary both before and after 9/11, it is by no means clear that they would give him free rein to attack the United States again. . . . [I]f they were lucky enough to regain power, it is hard to believe they would give us a reason to come back in force."

It's impossible to know for sure. But the last time the Taliban controlled a state, it was not so interested in realpolitik; after September 11, the group made clear that it was prepared to lose everything (and it did) rather than betray bin Laden. Since then, the Taliban's leadership has grown more closely aligned with Al Qaeda's worldwide goals—not less. Today, the Taliban seems to view itself as the vanguard of a global movement that is waging God-sanctioned holy war against the infidels. Foreign policy realists want to gamble that this group, once back in power, will suddenly transform into an ultra-rational clique of Henry Kissingers. Anything could happen, I guess. But, given everything we know about the Taliban, is that really a wise wager to make?

A Saudi official privy to negotiations between the Afghan government and more moderate elements of the Taliban says Mullah Omar has never rejected Al Qaeda.

Another common critique of the U.S. mission in Afghanistan is that there are numerous potential safe havens in the world; if Al Qaeda were facing defeat in Afghanistan, wouldn't it simply relocate to a more permissive venue? Those who raise this point are essentially talking about two things: on the one hand, the prospect of Al Qaeda moving somewhere far away like Somalia or Yemen; on the other hand, the reality that, no matter what we do to stabilize Afghanistan, its neighbor Pakistan will always be off-limits to American invasion and therefore available as a haven for Al Qaeda.

The point about Somalia and Yemen is unconvincing. Jihadists based there have shown no ability to hit targets anywhere but in their immediate neighborhoods. Many years after September 11, there is scant evidence that any senior Al Qaeda leaders have relocated to either place. For its part, Somalia is probably too anarchic, and possibly too African as well, for the largely middle-class Arab membership of Al Qaeda. In theory, of course, it's always possible that Al Qaeda could pick up and move elsewhere. But, with the exception of a few years in the 1990s, Al Qaeda has now been based in Afghanistan and Pakistan for a generation. This is the region where its leaders feel comfortable, where they have put down roots. If they didn't leave even after the United States conquered Afghanistan in late 2001, it seems unlikely that they will in the future.

The point about Pakistan serving as a safe haven is a bit more complicated. After all, what good does it do to secure Afghanistan when Al Qaeda and the Taliban are headquartered in Pakistan? Actually, plenty. "Defending Afghanistan will not eradicate a terror network in Pakistan," explains Georgetown professor Bruce Hoffman. "But failing to defend Afghanistan will almost certainly give Al Qaeda new momentum and the greater freedom of action that an expanded geographical ambit will facilitate."

There is historical precedent for Hoffman's warning. Al Qaeda was founded in Pakistan in 1988, and many of the Taliban's leaders and foot soldiers emerged out of Pakistani madrassas and refugee camps. The political vacuum in Afghanistan during the 1990s allowed these militants to expand into the country. The result, clearly, was a much stronger Al Qaeda.

The final argument against the centrality of Afghanistan has to do with the Internet. Former Army captain Andrew Exum asserted a few months ago (in a TNR Online article) that current U.S. strategy "betrays an obsession with physical space at the expense of virtual

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space." It is certainly true that terrorists have used the Web to communicate and, quite adeptly, for propaganda. But there is no evidence that any terrorist attack anywhere has been successfully operationalized or coordinated mainly through the Internet. I can say this with some degree of certainty because I have asked scores of counterterrorism analysts at the FBI and CIA whether a terrorist attack has ever been coordinated over the Internet—and all have drawn a blank. It is also worth recalling that the most lethal terrorist attack in history was directed from Afghanistan under the Taliban, a country with—forget the Internet—almost no phone system and little electricity.

The Web, it turns out, is of limited use for training terrorists. Take hydrogen-peroxide-based bombs, which have become something of a signature for Al Qaeda in recent years—figuring prominently in the 2005 London subway bombings, the thwarted plot to bring down seven passenger planes in 2006, the failed plan to bomb Ramstein Air Base a year later, and, now, the Zazi case. Two years ago, I spent a day at an abandoned rock quarry in the placid English county of Somerset filming a documentary about homemade bombs. My host was Dr. Sidney Alford, a leading explosives engineer with the air of the "Q" character from James Bond movies. He was conducting a demonstration to show just how effective peroxide-based bombs are—and also how difficult they are to construct correctly.

Alford concentrated some hair bleach to a high strength, combining it with an organic material—in this case, black pepper, just as the London subway bombers had done. It was a difficult process, not something that could be picked up from just sitting down in front of a computer screen. "The real skill is getting the peroxide mixture or hair bleach to the right strength," Alford explained, a process that took hours of careful preparation to ensure the proper ratios. Indeed, when amateurs try to use similar techniques, it can end messily. In 2006 in Texas City, Matthew Rugo and his roommate Curtis Jetton, both 21, were making this type of explosive when it blew up, killing Rugo, injuring Jetton, and gutting the apartment in which they were experimenting.

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But the benefits of a physical safe haven go well beyond the ability to properly train bomb-makers. A flavor of life in an Al Qaeda training camp is provided by Shadi Abdallah, a Jordanian who attended the group's Al Farouq camp in Afghanistan before being arrested in Germany in 2002. Here was the account he gave to German interrogators:

> After the basic training it was possible to receive special training in an area of special talent and/or interest. . . . Possible areas included: tactical training in mountain, urban or desert warfare; anti-aircraft combat on rocket grenade launchers; fighting against armored targets, i.e. tanks; terrorist attacks and assassinations. . . . The first subject in which we were trained was the use of firearms. The second subject included correct behavior in outside terrain: camouflage, forms of movement, deception. In the third subject they taught us how to orient ourselves outside. The fourth and last subject was the use of explosives. The arms training lasted three weeks; all other subjects involved a week of training each.

The trainees who emerge from these camps forge bonds of deep trust through communal living and shared privation. The idea that this can be replicated over the Internet is absurd. Just as the U.S. military does not train its soldiers over the Internet, nor do effective terrorist groups.

Al Qaeda's leaders are themselves keenly aware of the importance of maintaining a safe haven. The very words Al Qaeda mean "the base" in Arabic; and, as bin Laden explained in an interview with Al Jazeera in 2001, the name is not a reference to some kind of abstract foundation but, rather, to a physical spot for training: "Abu Ubaidah Al Banjshiri [an early military commander of Al Qaeda] created a military base to train the young men to fight. . . . So this place was called 'The Base,' as in a training base, and the name grew from this."

But it isn't just a safe haven that Al Qaeda wants; it is a state. As Zawahiri explained shortly after September 11 in his autobiographical *Knights Under the Prophet's Banner*, "Confronting the enemies of Islam, and launching jihad against them require a Muslim authority, established on a Muslim land that raises the banner of jihad and rallies the Muslims around it. Without achieving this goal our actions will mean nothing." No wonder Al Qaeda remains so committed to Afghanistan—and so deeply invested in helping the Taliban succeed.

Of course, the centrality of Afghanistan to the war on terrorism is separate from the matter of whether we can actually secure the country. But, while Afghanistan will not be transformed into a stable country easily or quickly, we should take heart from the fact that the Afghan people want us to try. Most polls since the fall of the Taliban have found that a majority of Afghans hold a favorable view of the international presence in their country. Nationwide surveys conducted earlier this year showed that 62 percent of Afghans view the United States favorably and 63 percent support the U.S. military. By contrast, the Taliban's favorable ratings are consistently below 10 percent. In counterinsurgency theory, the center of gravity of the conflict is the population. The fact that the Afghan people remain both overwhelmingly opposed to the Taliban and also quite supportive of us—even after all of the mistakes we have made over the past eight years—should tell us that securing the country is not an impossible task.

The flawed election of Hamid Karzai and the pervasive corruption of his government, to be sure, raise a serious question connected to another key aspect of counterinsurgency doctrine: Is there a legitimate government to support? But Afghans, who have not had much functional government in their lives, actually want something much simpler than that: They want security. That is why many of them at first embraced the Taliban in the mid-1990s—because it at least delivered this paramount public good. In the short term, it is probably impossible to significantly reform the Afghan government. But security is something that international forces *can* provide. And, once there is security, perhaps over the long term there will be openings for political change as well.

For years, we in the United States have known about Afghanistan only in the context of war. And so, it has become difficult for us to believe that things there could ever be any other way. But not so long ago, during the mid-twentieth century, Afghanistan was a country at peace with itself and its neighbors. It can be a peaceful nation again. And, if America is to keep Al Qaeda at bay, it must be. ◆

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Is There a Middle Way?

The problem with half-measures in Afghanistan.

STEPHEN BIDDLE

General Stanley McChrystal's request to send more troops to Afghanistan has induced sticker shock for many Americans—including, apparently, President Obama. The integrated counterinsurgency, or COIN, strategy that McChrystal wants to pursue has many components: protecting Afghan civilians, rapidly expanding the Afghan army and police, reforming government, providing economic development assistance, weaning Taliban fighters and leaders away from Mullah Omar and Osama bin Laden, reconciling them into the new government, and targeting those who refuse. This makes it a demanding strategy that McChrystal reportedly believes will require providing at least an additional 10,000 to 40,000 U.S. troops and more than doubling existing Afghan forces to a total of 400,000 indigenous soldiers and police. (Full disclosure: I served as a member of General McChrystal's assessment team in June and July 2009, but I do not speak for his command, and the views expressed here are strictly my own.) This price tag has further galvanized opposition to a war whose support was already fading fast.

Few, however, actually want to leave Afghanistan outright. Instead, most pair their opposition to reinforcement with support for a middle way—a more limited presence intended to secure U.S. interests without the cost and risk of escalation. Opponents have proposed at least a half-dozen such "middle ways," ranging from greater reliance on drone-based counterterrorism strikes to early pursuit of a negotiated settlement to end the war. The specifics are often fuzzy; none has been articulated with the detail of McChrystal's proposal, particularly regarding troop requirements. But most are tantamount to splitting off a piece of McChrystal-style integrated COIN and executing it alone. Some critics propose pursuing pieces in combination, but none attempts the totality, and, especially, none includes McChrystal's large U.S. ground combat presence for protecting Afghan civilians. For all, the underlying idea is to reduce the cost of the war without abandoning the U.S. interest in denying

There is no easy or palatable way out of Afghanistan.

Chad Hunt

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Al Qaeda a base for attacking the West or destabilizing neighboring Pakistan.

It is easy to see why such middle ways are so popular. They could lighten the burden on the federal deficit. They could put fewer Americans in harm's way. They would seem to better fit the U.S. interests at stake, which are real but limited and indirect. They appeal to the centrism of many American voters. The problem is that they probably won't work.

The reasons vary from proposal to proposal, but the basic problem is that the pieces of COIN are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. The whole is greater than the sum of the parts; implementing just one or two pieces alone undermines their effectiveness. It might make sense to do less and accept a greater risk of failure, depending on one's tolerance for risk and cost. But there is no magic middle way between the McChrystal recommendation and total withdrawal that offers comparable odds at lower cost. In counterinsurgency, less is not more.

Train, Don't Fight

One of the most popular middle ways is to shift the U.S. role from combat to training and advising Afghan forces. This would put an Afghan face on the war effort, it would place the burden of the fighting on those with the most at stake, and it would ostensibly reduce U.S. exposure to casualties. Building the indigenous military is in fact a major element of General McChrystal's proposal. The real difference between his vision and that of his opponents is the latter's desire to accomplish this while reducing our combat presence. But training and combat are not exclusive of one another. The former requires the latter, and to field a large Afghan force faster will require more, not fewer, U.S. combat troops.

To build an indigenous security force in the middle of a war is not like teaching math to high school students—it cannot be done successfully by a handful of teachers in classrooms with chalk and blackboards. To field Afghan troops quickly without breaking them in the process requires close partnership on the battlefield, with experienced Western combat units that provide on-the-job training, mentoring, confidence-building, fire support, and stiffening in actual combat. And this requires Western troops, in large numbers, living and fighting together with Afghan forces at all levels of command. The faster the Afghans are to be fielded, the more Western combat forces are needed. If a large Afghan military is to be raised, then many tens of thousands of Americans will be needed, and those Americans will be exposed to combat, and to casualties.

And the process takes time even so. In the meantime, someone must protect not just key population centers but also the recruitment centers, supply depots, bases, and transportation connections needed to create the new Afghan formations in the first place. Close partnership with expanded indigenous forces is indeed the best way to pursue counterinsurgency in Afghanistan. But this is not a plausible route to reducing U.S. combat activity or troop strength there any time soon.

Use Drones

Another popular middle way is to rely on drone attacks, of the kind now ongoing in northwest Pakistan, to suppress Al Qaeda without a major ground commitment in Afghanistan. By killing key leaders and limiting the others' freedom of action, it is argued, the drone strikes make large-scale terrorism much harder. Drone-based counterterrorism cannot destroy Al Qaeda outright, but it might be able to constrain it far more cheaply than a major counterinsurgency campaign could. Like training, however, leadership targeting is a normal part of integrated COIN, where it is used to disrupt enemy command and control, keep the opposition off balance, and encourage insurgents to negotiate lest they be killed. McChrystal himself led the use of such strikes during the "surge" in Iraq and will surely employ them in Afghanistan, too. But, as an alternative to COIN, counterterrorism has important shortcomings.

The biggest challenge to relying on drones is the need for intelligence. Drones are not wonder weapons; in particular, they require information on targets' whereabouts that is normally provided by other assets—and especially by host government cooperation on the ground. It was Pakistani government penetration of the Tehrik-e-Taliban, for example, that reportedly enabled a U.S. Predator drone to kill terrorist leader Baitullah Meshud in August 2009. In general, such spies, informants, and other tipsters are key intelligence sources for drone attacks on secretive terrorist groups. This "human intelligence," however, is very hard to get if the government on the ground decides to deny it to the United States. Penetrating wary, secretive, ruthless terrorist organizations with human informers is hard enough anywhere, but to do so on the soil of an actively hostile state means facing multiple layers of state security and counterintelligence efforts before getting anywhere near the terrorists. For a sustained drone campaign to keep a resilient group like Al Qaeda on the ropes requires systematic intelligence of the kind that is very hard to get without the access enabled by a tolerant government.

Security trends in Afghanistan are dangerously adverse; a major reduction in the U.S. combat presence could easily lead to the collapse of the Karzai government. If the Taliban were restored to power in Kabul because U.S. counterinsurgency failed, we would obviously lose the access we now have in Afghanistan, significantly hampering our ability to pursue Al Qaeda there. Perhaps even worse, the Taliban could threaten the stability of the government in Islamabad. In 2000, the Taliban ruled Afghanistan and Pakistan was their ally, but, in 2001, the Bush administration coerced Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf into turning on his erstwhile allies and aligning with the United States. That switch in allegiances was never as complete as Washington wanted, but it was enough to persuade the Taliban and a variety of other Islamist terrorist groups within Pakistan that the secular government in Islamabad had become a tool of the hated Americans. The result has been a growing insurgency within Pakistan fueled by groups once aligned with (and, indeed, created by) the government they now attack.

These groups are diverse, and the connections between them are complex—they are not a monolithic, unified front. But they are interconnected, and they share great distrust of both the United States and a secular Pakistani government. Collectively, they have mounted an insurgency that is dangerous enough as it is; given the advantage of a state-scale haven across the Durand Line, their virulence could increase dramatically. If the failure of counterinsurgency in Afghanistan enabled insurgents to succeed in Pakistan, the effectiveness of U.S. counterterrorism efforts would plummet even as the need for them skyrocketed. Collapse of the Pakistani state would create an urgent need to prevent its nuclear weapons from falling into the hands of Al Qaeda or other radicals, yet the loss of government intelligence would hamstring our ability to do so.

To be sure, the connection between Afghan and Pakistani stability is incomplete. Karzai could fall, but, if the Pakistanis put their house in order and defeated their own insurgency, then the net consequences would be moderate; conversely, Pakistan could fail even if Afghanistan stabilizes. The problem is that the odds of success in Afghan COIN and Pakistani

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counterterrorism move in the same direction. COIN failure makes counterterrorism failure more likely, and vice versa. And this makes counterterrorism a poor substitute for counterinsurgency.

Reconcile with the Taliban

ANOTHER COMMON proposal is to negotiate a power-sharing deal with some or all of the Taliban as a means of ending the war without the escalation embodied in the McChrystal recommendations. America's real interests are quite limited, it is often argued, so why not pursue a settlement to bring the Taliban into a coalition government on the proviso that they keep Al Qaeda out and deny the use of Afghan territory for destabilizing Pakistan? Others recommend lower-level reconciliation with individual Taliban foot soldiers. Many of these soldiers fight more for the financial incentive of pay to feed their families than for any ideological commitment to Mullah Omar; if so, then why not outbid the Taliban for their services and win them over to the government's side without killing or capturing them all?

Here, too, the only real difference with McChrystal's proposal is the assumption that this course of action is an alternative to reinforcement and escalation. After all, the McChrystal report itself explicitly calls for low-level reconciliation with Taliban fighters, and many successful counterinsurgencies end by negotiation rather than outright annihilation of the last insurgent. The problem is the idea that this can be done on the cheap and still produce terms the West can accept. It cannot.

Today, the Taliban have little incentive to accept any deal that the West could live with. Taliban leaders appear to believe that they are winning the war and will soon drive out the foreigners and topple the Karzai government. This is hardly unreasonable: The McChrystal report itself suggests that the security trends are now dangerously negative for the government. Why should Taliban leaders compromise for half a loaf when the whole bakery is available? Karzai has reportedly been reaching out to the Quetta Shura and Hekmatyar factions of the Taliban via Saudi intermediaries for some time now; the talks have never made real progress because the Taliban insist on a total withdrawal of foreign forces as a precondition for negotiation. This is an obvious nonstarter, and the Taliban surely understand this—the indications are that they are unwilling to accept any meaningful compromise because they think total victory is within reach.

A similar problem confronts related proposals for lower-level reconciliation with individual Taliban foot soldiers. In principle, the government could try to outbid the Taliban for their services. The Taliban, however, are not easy employers to leave. Foot soldiers who turn on them are subject to brutal retaliation against themselves and their families. If the government cannot protect them from the inevitable retribution, it would be suicidal for individuals or small groups of fighters to change sides. Nor is mere acceptance of government subsidies real evidence of realignment: The worst outcome would be paying fighters who join government militias but answer to Taliban commanders because of threats to their families.

This is not to say that negotiation is unwise, or that low-level reconciliation is impossible. If an improved Western military effort persuaded key factions that the payoff to fighting is lower and the cost higher than they think now, then deals might be possible. And a credible promise of real security under government pay could wean away an important fraction of today's Taliban foot soldiers. Such deals could substantially shorten the war and reduce its cost to all sides. But, without a major change in the tide of battle and the associated expectations, it is hard to see where the common ground lies. The heart of the McChrystal approach is to produce exactly that change in the tide of battle, but it will be hard to get the result without the price.

Buy Off Warlords

IT IS SOMETIMES argued that the West should stabilize Afghanistan and control Al Qaeda by paying warlords, tribal leaders, or other local power brokers to police their own turf, rather than relying on the national government in Kabul to control the entire country. Afghanistan has never had a strong central government, and order in the provinces has often been maintained by local authorities, legal and otherwise. The British, it is said, found direct control impossible but managed to wield influence by paying tribal or factional leaders. If the United States is willing to settle for government-by-warlord, then it could avoid the expense and risk of an orthodox counterinsurgency campaign while still denying militants access to Afghan havens.

Some increase in the role of tribes or other local authorities is very likely, but here, too, the issue is whether this can substitute for the cost and expense of counterinsurgency and enable a solution on the cheap. Unfortunately, it probably cannot. The central problem is very similar to that of negotiating with the Taliban: Parties' alignments turn powerfully on their expectations for the outcome of the war. It is dangerous to end up on the wrong side, and today, too many Afghans think the Taliban will win. If the United States pulls back and tries to compensate with payola, this will just reinforce the perception that a Taliban takeover is coming. And why would coldly self-interested warlords risk their lives by crossing the Taliban on behalf of an absentee benefactor who clearly lacks the motivation to defend its local allies? The odds are that such factions will take U.S. money, then side with the enemy once the latter shows up and threatens superior force. Payments, subsidies, and aid of various kinds can be a powerful adjunct to a broader strategy that includes the forces needed to defend allies and defeat the insurgency. But, if it looks to Afghans like the West is losing to the insurgents, it will be dangerous for them to buck the tide at risk of their lives, and money alone is unlikely to change this.

What's more, some of the more prominent sub-national authorities are even less popular than the central government. The traditional tribal leadership is one thing, but many of Afghanistan's former warlords and current narcotics kingpins are hated figures whose predatory rule is disliked even more than that of the Taliban. Indeed, Western and central government complicity with such figures has helped the Taliban penetrate Afghan society. Better pay for warlords is hardly the way to create a government that Afghans will prefer to the insurgency. As a component of a broader strategy that includes both sufficient forces for security and an insistence on governance reforms to halt the worst of today's predatory excesses, some form of decentralization and acceptance of sub-national autonomy and authority is probably necessary and appropriate. But simply paying off warlords to do America's dirty work for it in the absence of a much broader counterinsurgency strategy is unlikely to succeed.

Tread Lightly

SOME ARGUE THAT the chief obstacle in Afghanistan is nationalist resistance to foreign occupation. In a proud, xenophobic society, they say, foreign forces stimulate something akin to an "antibody reaction" in which, regardless of the foreigners' mission or intentions, Afghans will fight to expel any alien presence. The larger and more visible the foreign presence, the harsher the resistance. If so, reinforcement will only make

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things worse, and a better strategy would be to reduce outside forces to minimal strength, adequate only to advise Afghan leaders on defending themselves.

Afghans surely resent foreign occupation, as would anyone. But it is far from clear that this is the primary problem, or that a drawdown to a "light footprint" could defeat the Taliban. After all, we've tried it, and it hasn't worked.

In 2004, there were only 15,200 foreign troops in Afghanistan; as recently as 2006, there were only 20,400 in a country of about 30 million people. The thinness of these deployments was defended by then–Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld precisely in terms of a perceived need to avoid nationalist resistance to a foreign occupation. If a light footprint could avert insurgency, then there should be no war in Afghanistan today. To put it mildly, it has not worked out that way: The Rumsfeld light-footprint policy gave us the mess we have now. It yielded too little security to protect the population from the Taliban, too few trainers and advisers to create an indigenous military, but enough of a foreign presence to alienate the public all the same.

By contrast, there is evidence to suggest that civilians will accept foreign forces when these are strong enough to bring security in exchange. Americans, for example, were hated and resisted in Iraq's Anbar Province between 2004 and 2006, when there were enough of them to be irritating but too few to provide real security. By late 2007, when reinforcements (together with the Anbar Awakening) enabled the troops to offer security, their presence was tolerated to the point where I was able to walk through the central marketplace in Fallujah handing out candy to schoolchildren. Afghanistan, by contrast, is now the worst of both worlds: There are enough foreign forces to be off-putting, but not enough to secure the population. Reducing those numbers would cede the country to the insurgents; increasing them to enable real security might make the price worth paying for Afghans.

Send Aid, Not Troops

Another proposal would shift the international contribution from combat to development assistance. Prosperity and an economic stake in the government, it is argued, can wean the population from the Taliban more effectively than force, which inevitably causes collateral damage and kills innocent civilians. Aid, moreover, is an asymmetric advantage for the West, which can vastly outspend the Taliban, and would avert the "antibody reaction" spurred by foreign soldiers, instead inoculating the population against an insurgency that can offer little more than violence. Military force is also extremely expensive; for the cost of today's U.S. troop deployments, the total aid budget for Afghanistan could be increased many times over. Given this, some advocate replacing large military deployments with major increases in development aid instead.

Aid is in fact a major component of orthodox counterinsurgency strategy. But to rely on it as an alternative to the security provided by military forces is impractical in an active war zone. Aid is inherently political and is clearly understood to be so by the Taliban, who systematically target Western aid projects for attack. Without large security forces to defend them, aid projects cannot survive. In fact, development projects in Afghanistan are often destroyed even when they are defended, if those defenses are inadequate. No sensible Taliban would allow aid projects to undermine their control over the population when insurgents have the means at their disposal to destroy them or to intimidate their staff. Aid without security in Afghanistan would be fruitless.

None of the usual middle-way proposals are thus likely to be effective as alternatives to reinforcement. Many are potentially important components of an integrated, properly resourced COIN strategy. But to pull pieces out of this integrated context and undertake them as substitutes for major troop deployments is to deny them essential preconditions they need to function. The pieces of orthodox COIN strategy interact: security enables development and governance, development and governance enhance security, governance facilitates counterterrorism, counterterrorism improves security, security enables negotiation and reconciliation. Each is a valuable complement to the others; none is a viable substitute. Integrated COIN is itself no guarantee of success. Social scientists have estimated its success rate at somewhere between 25 and 70 percent at best. But middle ways are even less promising because they lack the key enablers of an integrated strategy and the synergies that result.

Of course, the United States could in principle pursue the current COIN mission in Afghanistan with only the forces already committed. (At present, there are almost 68,000 U.S. troops, 35,000 non-U.S. foreign soldiers, 90,000 Afghan troops, and 80,000 Afghan police.) But muddling through a COIN strategy with insufficient resources increases the risk of failure, while leaving an already large and burdensome U.S. presence in place. Balancing cost and risk is central to the whole issue of U.S. strategy. General McChrystal's own troop request is reportedly framed as a choice between a large option offering the lowest risk, and a much smaller reinforcement with greater risks. No reinforcement at all would increase those risks accordingly. But, whereas many of the other proposed "middle ways" would at least reduce the burden dramatically in exchange, muddling through with an under-resourced version of integrated COIN would increase the danger of ending up in the worst of all worlds, with enough force deployed to be a heavy burden on the military, the budget, and the patience of Afghans and Americans, but not enough force to succeed. In other words, we might fail expensively rather than cheaply.

Taliban leaders believe they're winning. Why would they negotiate with us for half a loaf when the bakery is available?

In a world of probabilities rather than guarantees, no strategy can ensure success. But integrated COIN offers a higher probability of success than any of the proposed middle ways; middle ways are cheaper, but also likelier to fail. The result is not a single, analytically derivable right and true answer for U.S. strategy—instead, we face a hard value judgment in choosing between better odds at a higher price or worse odds at a lower cost. What analysis does show, however, is that there is no middle way that offers COIN's odds without its sacrifices. Years of neglect and error have produced a situation in South Asia where none of the available options offers an easy or palatable way out of a difficult set of dilemmas. It is understandable that Americans would like a cheaper way to secure U.S. interests in Afghanistan than reinforcement and COIN; it is far less clear that a middle way exists that can accomplish this. ◆

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Stanley Kauffmann on Films

MATTERS OF FACT

In the mid-1950s, a photographer named Robert Frank, lately emigrated from Switzerland, drove around the United States to see and to join his new country. He shot pictures. The results, or his choices among them, were published in a book of eighty-three photos called *The Americans*, which was an immediate and lasting success. The book was not only a unique way for a newcomer to learn about his new home: in some ways it showed a social candor that was as yet unusual in photography. In his introduction to the book, Jack Kerouac wrote: "Robert Frank, Swiss, unobtrusive, nice, with that little camera that he raises and snaps with one hand he sucked a sad poem right out of America onto film." We can still look over Frank's shoulder and see that poem in the making.

Fifty years later, another European, the French photographer and director Philippe Séclier, retraced Frank's footsteps—tire treads, really. In a film called *An American Journey*, Séclier travels to see this country today from the same vantage points as Frank: South Carolina, Montana, Louisiana, and so enticingly on. Séclier includes interviews with some experts, mostly modern curators of photography, who support his view of Frank's pioneering in photography as social inquiry. It is hardly a surprise that almost all the people who were in the original shots are no longer around, but all the towns and cities have greatly changed, too. Séclier gives us the essence of Frank's vision as understood by his own.

These days we are all so awash in photography that Séclier can add little to our knowledge of the way America looks. Essentially what he brings us is not news but difference—why and how the mining town of Butte is not the same, why Frank's sidewise view of a segregated New Orleans trolley is now a historical document. We find ourselves wondering what a comparable Séclier—equipped with what camera technology?—will see on a similar trip fifty years from now.

His work underscores an element that implicitly and sometimes visibly overwhelmed Frank: the size of this country. Frank, like many Europeans, was struck by the fact that in America, after you have traveled a long way, there is still a long way to go. Séclier found, almost naïvely, that to reach the Frank sites he had to move and move and move. His closing credit is "Directing and driving by Philippe Séclier." Most of the shots of auto travel in his film are slightly blurred, as if to signify that he was voyaging through a kind of outer space on earth. Thus, like Frank, he ultimately situates the places that he visits in vastness. It is part of the American *Geist*. He makes us remember the opening of John Ford's version of *The Grapes of Wrath*, when Henry Fonda walks away from us into a wide landscape down a narrow road; and the very last line of the Dos Passos trilogy *U.S.A.*: "A hundred miles down the road"; and Kerouac's own *On the Road*; and Frank's highway shots of U.S. 30 in Nebraska and U.S. 285 in New Mexico. And look at Séclier's title. He is revisiting Frank's particulars in a continental cosmos.

Subsequently Frank had a substantial film-making career, most notably with *Pull My Daisy*, a sort of ballad of Beatniks written and narrated by Kerouac. But he never abandoned still photography. It is as if he refused to concede that cinema was an automatic improvement on it. Film always swaggers a bit over stills, perhaps because it glories in the delusion that it can really defeat mortality. The still photograph more quietly knows that it at least preserves one infinitely deep moment.

AN AMERICAN JOURNEY
Lorber Films

CHELSEA ON THE ROCKS
Aliquot Films

ARAYA
Milestone Films

Back when the Underground was in the foreground of film discussion, Andy Warhol made a picture called *The Chelsea Girls*. It was shot in the celebrated Hotel Chelsea in New York, but it had much less to do with its setting than with Warhol's attempts to reshape film form. Nonetheless, he felt a need to mention the place in his title.

Now, however, comes a concentration on the place—*Chelsea on the Rocks*, a documentary meant as memorial. The hotel has had a century-old reputation as a rather free-and-easy, convivial roost for all kinds of artists: it has now changed ownership, and this film was made as tribute to a landmark that may be changing. The director is Abel Ferrara, who made such numbers as *Bad Lieutenant* and *King of New York*, and is not especially known for sentiment. But he was drawn to this subject and has handled it with all the appropriate mist and chuckle.

The Chelsea, which has 250 rooms, was built on West 23rd Street in Manhattan in the late nineteenth century. It was first an apartment house, but was soon converted into a hotel. During the last century it was the owners' pride that the atmosphere of the place did not change and that its business dealings with residents remained easy. It was determinedly impervious to all that was racing along in the city around it and stayed as late

ANTHONY RUSSO

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Victorian as it could. The lobby was festooned with the work of resident artists who were up-to-the-minute, but they, too, were glad that the place retained its quasi-historical air.

Names from Mark Twain on filter through the Chelsea air. Dylan Thomas was living there when he went out on his lethal binge. Tennessee Williams was a familiar for a time. Virgil Thomson, a longtime resident, wrote an opera there. Arthur Miller kept a haven there for years. Ethan Hawke remembers a funny conversation a few years ago with the famously congenial manager. As the years rolled on, stories about ghosts in certain rooms began to accrue. Through the years, drugs became more openly part of Chelsea people's lives. (Drinking, of course, had always been there.)

Ferrara could have used more spikes, identification lines on screen, with more of his subjects. Most of what the many speakers have to say is interesting enough—in this context, anyway—but often, though we know that the speaker is some sort of artist, we don't recognize him or her.

The film is decently shot and neatly edited, and it tugs a bit even at those viewers—most of us, of course—who don't really know the place. The main interesting aspect of the hotel is that it survived as long as it did, that there were always some people who wanted a refuge from the world capital of Newness. Ferrara has fashioned a pleasant memento of a place that, in its looks and in its manner of being, was in itself a memento.

The term "documentary," as many have noted, is inadequate—too general, like the term "nonfiction" in the book world. Some documentaries are indeed reportage: many, though factual, attempt much more. Such a work is *Araya,* an extraordinary film about Venezuelan laborers.

It was made in 1959 and was shown at Cannes where it won prizes—it shared the International Critics Prize with *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*—but it was skimpily exhibited. About every ten years since, we're told, *Araya* has been shown again, warmly received, then lost again. Now, on its fiftieth anniversary, a distributor brings it back once more. This time, we can hope that it will linger, at least with the fitful permanence that many more adequately recognized films have known.

Araya is the name of a peninsula on the northeastern coast of Venezuela. Fifty years ago a young director called Margot Benacerraf was struck by the facts of the place and saw that the facts were the surface of immensities. Fishing went on there, naturally, but the two gods of the peninsula were sun and salt. The sea kept washing up on the barren cliffs along the coast, and the sun kept burning the water down to its salt. The cliffs were covered with thick layers of crusted salt, and most of the men in the area lived by digging it up and, in long files, carrying it off to wagons and trucks. Some men even went out in boats and dug up rocks of salt from the sea bottom. At least all this was the case in 1959, and Benacerraf wanted to record a four-hundred-year-old way of life before it disappeared.

The scope, the antiquity of the work, the patient movement of the workers over and over again, obviously struck Benacerraf as a heroic struggle to wrest livelihood from the seemingly barren. More, she saw the almost balletic rhythms winding across and around this immensity. With a gifted cinematographer, Giuseppe Nisoli, she blended the two elements of struggle and taunting beauty. The black-and-white rendition of these lives brings a kind of welcome pang. We don't want to slip into aesthetic rhapsody about labor—backbreaking work is backbreaking work—yet the nearly choreographed lines of these laborers keep moving past brute facts. It is much the same twist that I remember from *The Pearl* (1948), with Gabriel Figueroa's exquisite cinematography of the hard lives of Mexican pearl fishers.

Benacerraf shows us all that we need of the salt miners' homes and wives, of their children and their lovers, to complete the daily reality. But at the end a new reality invades: cranes and trucks arrive to take over the salt work and to change many lives. Some of the manual mining apparently continues, especially in the boats, but *Araya* is a record. Today, when we look at eighteenth-century spinning wheels, we see lovely objects, and we also are glad that the drudgery involved is now foregone. *Araya* preserves the same sort of ironic beauty. ◆

Oleg Grabar
SEEING AND BELIEVING

The image of the prophet in Islam: the real story.

Are representations of the Prophet Muhammad permitted in Islam? To make or not to make images of the Prophet: that is the question I will try to answer. It is an unexpectedly burning question, as the newspapers regularly demonstrate. But both the answer to the question and the reasons for raising it require a broader introduction.

There have been many times in recent years when one bemoaned the explosion of media that have provided public forums for so much incompetence and ignorance, not to speak of prejudice. Matters became worse after September 11, for two additional reasons. The first is the propagation of a climate of fear, of ever-present danger from ill-defined foes, which led in the West, and especially in the United States, to a plethora of security measures ranging from reasonable and useful to ridiculous and demeaning. Penetrating and perverting institutions and individuals, this fear collided in the Muslim world with a complex ideological and psychological evolution that led many people in Muslim countries and communities to a reflexive and often self-destructive brutality in reaction to the slightest whiff of verbal or visual provocation.

The second reason is the exacerbation of a mode of judgment that is not new by itself but has in recent years acquired frightening dimensions. It consists in identifying the country—or religion, ethnicity, race, or any other general category of human association—of anyone responsible for a crime or misdeed, and then condemning the whole group for the action of a single person. The crimes and misdeeds, I should add, need not be recent ones. They can be—and often are—events of many years and even centuries ago. A cult of past and present horrors surrounds us. The paradoxical analysis of past evils according to contemporary norms has the effect of denying history, which has its own explanation of events.

Recently Yale University Press, one of the most distinguished university presses in America, agreed to publish *The Cartoons That Shook the World* by Jytte Klausen, an academically acceptable and well-researched study of the

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publication by a Danish newspaper, in 2005, of cartoons willfully showing the Prophet Muhammad in vulgar and politically charged ways, and of the turbulent aftermath of their publication. As is well known, several weeks after their appearance these drawings—which should be called caricatures rather than cartoons: a first example of the technical ignorance in the media's accounts of the story—were shown, and sometimes simply mentioned without being shown, in Muslim communities in Europe, and then in various parts of the Muslim world. This led to riots, with losses of life, in a few cities, and to the destruction and the boycott of Danish products.

Klausen, who provides a careful chronology of the events, is a Danish political scientist who teaches at Brandeis University. Her book was meant to include the images themselves (which are available on the Internet) as well as earlier, mostly Western, illustrations of the Prophet Muhammad in a variety of contexts, usually not in a terribly favorable light. But at the last minute, and in accordance with opinions provided by a wide variety of people, Yale University Press decided to drop all representations of the Prophet from a book whose subject is their impact. The argument of the press was that the images could be considered offensive by Muslims and lead to violence, to attacks on Yale and other American institutions.

The assumption that the masses in Karachi and Jakarta would have seen, or otherwise taken note of, a book from Yale is a bit presumptuous—unless, of course, they were prodded by the media's sensationalism, and its interest in stories of riots by uncouth youths worked up in their anti-American feelings (by this point Yale and its actual book would be long forgotten) by local purveyors of hate and destruction. Yale's decision is certainly a denial of free speech, though of course the argument can be made that a possible danger to people may compel restrictions in the expression of opinions and of facts. I am not persuaded by this argument about this book. And the deletion of the images is also—a far more important criticism in this instance—a gratuitous betrayal of scholarship, since many other books (including at least four published by Yale, two of them by me) do show images of the Prophet.

Here I must make a disclosure. Several years ago, in a book on the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem that was published by Harvard University Press, I included a representation of a fourteenth-century Persian painting showing the archangel Gabriel bringing the city of Jerusalem to the Prophet Muhammad. The press requested that the section of the painting representing the Prophet be removed. First I objected and then I agreed, because its presence was not essential to my argument; but the episode left a bad taste in my mouth, a feeling of regret, especially in light of the fact that many learned books or journals, and even some popular ones, especially in Europe, publish pictures of the Prophet when such images are required by the text or proposed by their authors.

Generalities and disclosures aside, the substance of the dispute lies in the allegation made by Muslims, or at least some Muslims, and often repeated by the Western media, that representations of the Prophet are forbidden in Islam, and therefore that such representations as do exist, or have existed, within the Muslim world or beyond its borders are either sins or provocations. The conclusions to be drawn from such a view are obvious. Sins must be punished, and their repetition avoided; and provocations must be answered with vigor.

In reality, however, things are not so simple. In the past, and still today, pictures of the Prophet Muhammad have been produced, and are still produced, by Muslim artists for Muslim patrons. How do these images fit with the presumed existence within the Islamic world of a doctrine prohibiting all representations of living beings? To answer this last question, it is essential to understand the nature of a legal system that operates in the absence of an organization such as the church or of formal written codes of law accepted by the vast majority of those who claim to be Muslims.

From the very beginning of its existence, the Muslim world practiced and developed an elaborate legal system meant to control and to judge all aspects of life, but its totalistic ambition was often frustrated by its own sophistication and diversity. This system, known as *sharia*, was based on the Qur'an, an immutable divine revelation, and the *hadith*, a huge body of actions and statements attributed to the Prophet, whose authenticity—and reliability for believers—was discussed for centuries. The words of the Qur'an and the stories of the *hadith* were interpreted and re-interpreted for centuries by learned scholars and practicing judges, known respectively as *fuqaha* and *qudat* (the plural of *qadi*). Although a consensus was established on many issues, and was often adopted by the legal systems of Muslim states in our times, this consensus was not total or universal. With variations that arouse the passions of modern historians and politicians, the opinions and judgments of this tradition of legal interpretation can, in theory at least, range from absolute and constant to near-anarchical and open-ended.

The issue of the visual representation of human beings, and therefore of the Prophet too, belongs to the latter category. The Qur'an itself is silent on the subject. Only a single passage is usually quoted in discussions of the matter. This passage (3:43) relates the words spoken by God to Mary, the mother of Jesus, saying that her son will proclaim: "I come to you with a sign from your Lord. I will make for you out of clay the likeness of a bird, then I will breathe into it and it will become a bird, by the leave of God." This was understood by the majority of interpreters to mean that God alone can create life, and to imply that there is no point in representations other than to make them alive. Other passages that are sometimes adduced in discussions of representation refer to them as real or potential idols—which is to say, sinful less for what they are than for the behavior that they may encourage.

The fear of idolatry permeates the formative centuries (essentially the seventh and eighth of the common era) of Islamic culture, which is perfectly understandable when one recalls the importance of images in Christianity, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, and whatever pagan traces had remained in the vast territory, from the Atlantic Ocean to the frontiers of China, taken over by a relatively small army of Arab Muslim conquerors and missionaries. The result of these contacts with a world replete with religious and other imagery was a refusal by Muslims to make images—what scholars now call aniconism; and the frequent substitution of writing for representation. There are occasional examples of the destruction of images, though in early times such iconoclasm is much rarer in Islamic lands than in Christian lands. Eventually—possibly as early as the end of the eighth century, according to a shaky scholarly consensus—the condemnation of all those who make images became the view of the majority of legal scholars. And yet a minority kept on maintaining that beauty pleases God and does not necessarily lead to idolatry.

The result of all these opinions and feelings was complicated: religious art, in mosques in particular, avoided and rejected images, while the secular art of princes, and later of wealthy city dwellers, ornamented their abodes and the

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things in their possession with all sorts of representations. In other words, and in perfect harmony with the rich legal culture of the time, a range of possible attitudes toward religious imagery was maintained. Abstinence dominated, but it never became the only Muslim attitude or practice.

On the whole, especially when compared to the contemporary Eastern Christian world, which was rocked by the crisis of iconoclasm, the question of images was secondary within the thinking of the legal scholars, largely because neither the bases on which Islamic thought rests nor the specific needs of the Muslim faithful gave it much consideration. Although I am not familiar with the legal or theological literature of later centuries, or with the jurisprudential discourse in legal and theological schools in our own day, I suspect that the same comparative absence of extended reflection on the subject of iconography remained the case until the twentieth century, when technology made visual images ubiquitous. And even then the subject provoked relatively few comments. The one exception may be the milieu of Saudi Arabian wahhabism, where a doctrine of aniconic prohibition in official and public circumstances co-existed with the relatively open practice of displaying images in the privacy of homes or as homages to ruling princes. A sort of "don't ask, don't tell" policy seemed acceptable to the ruling classes, although rumbles for change could easily be felt in the few countries with forceful restrictions.

Muhammad Receiving His First Revelation from the Archangel Gabriel, from the *Jami al-Tawarikh* of Rashid al-Din, Iran, 1306–1307

COURTESY PRESTEL

Did the pictures of the Prophet Muhammad exist within this double system? The historical evidence is very curious. During the first six centuries of Islam's existence, there is one very early coin type, an example of which is kept at the American Numismatic Society in New York, which may have represented the Prophet Muhammad; but this interpretation is far from being accepted by all scholars. And then, in the tenth century, there developed a fascinating story. It was said that there was an image of the Prophet in the possession of the Byzantine Christian emperor, which was shown by him to early Muslim ambassadors who came to convert him to Islam. The alleged image was in a collection of images of prophets from Adam to Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad. It served to demonstrate that Muhammad was indeed the last of the messengers sent by God for the salvation of man. One account of this image is that it was made by a Christian monk named Bahirah, who recognized prophecy in the youthful Muhammad accompanying a caravan of merchants from Mecca.

Until very recently, the sensuous representation of young Muhammad, as allegedly painted by Bahirah, could be acquired in Iran. It had been copied and reproduced in the many ways in which the commercial society of today distributes its most valued symbols. The image has undergone recent changes, and it no longer exhibits the slightly risqué sensuality of its early versions—whose original, according to the Persian inscription at the bottom of the image, was kept in a "western or Christian museum" (*muze-i rum*), a mysterious and perhaps mythical location which deserves its own philological and psychological analysis. The casuistic explanation by Islamic scholars for the existence of this image was that it belonged to a time that preceded the assumption of prophethood by Muhammad, and that therefore "Islamic" rules did not apply to it.

The alleged existence of such early images of the Prophet was fascinatingly developed among Chinese Muslims of later times. There is a story, told in various texts, that a Chinese emperor had heard of Muhammad and wanted to know more about him and his new beliefs. He invited Muhammad to visit China and to convert its people, but Muhammad thought the trip too complicated, and instead he sent a picture of himself. The Chinese emperor set it on his bed, and once the country had been converted, the picture disappeared. There are several variants to this story, which serves simply to show that, even when there is no sign of the existence of actual portraits, the idea of such portraits of holy figures existed, and was usually associated with others rather than Muslims, in this case with Western Christians or Chinese. As so often in every cultural system, foreigners are responsible for things that seem wrong or embarrassing.

What is more important, for our purposes, is that these stories—written by and for Muslims about non-Muslims—employed images to demonstrate the point of Muhammad's uniqueness within a divine revelation through a series of prophets that began with Adam. In a paradox that permeates much of early Islamic thought on this subject, this visual and theological uniqueness co-existed with the very human reality of a particular person's life and demeanor, which were described (and of course praised) in many accounts. As we shall see, this paradox affected the further history of images of Muhammad.

A major transformation took place in Islamic culture from around 1200 onward. The old centers of science and culture were profoundly affected by ethnic change (mass immigration of Turks), territorial change (the conquest of Anatolia and of northern India), social change (the growth of a feudal order and of an urban middle class), religious change (a complex symbiosis of Sunnism and Shiism, and the growth of mystical Sufi movements), and intellectual change (the emergence of a brilliant new Persian literature, and of vast theological and philosophical syntheses). In the Arab world, and especially in Iran, there was born a new art of book illustration. One of its earliest examples is the Persian manuscript of a mystical romance known by the name of *Warqa wa Gulshah*, now kept in an Istanbul museum, usually dated to the early thirteenth century

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and probably executed in Anatolia or in Iranian Azerbaijan.

In one of the miniatures in *Warqa wa Gulshah*, the Prophet Muhammad is seated on a princely throne and is surrounded by the first four caliphs, the so-called orthodox caliphs who succeeded the Prophet at the head of the Muslim community, who are shown like members of a feudal court, some carrying military symbols, others bureaucratic ones. Nothing distinguishes the Prophet from the other personages in the miniature. They all have a halo, a sign of honor probably picked up from Christian art. In another miniature, the Prophet is shown accomplishing the unique task of resurrecting two lovers who had already been buried. He is smaller than all the other figures in the painting, and is making a simple gesture of the hand to accomplish his task. Similar secondary appearances occur a few more times in fourteenth-century chronicles or romances, but not very frequently.

More interesting representations of the Prophet appear in two other manuscripts, both of which happen to be housed in Edinburgh. One is a copy of a celebrated *History of Ancient Times* by the great polymath Al-Biruni, who died around 1050. The manuscript dates from around 1300. One striking miniature in the manuscript shows Muhammad surrounded by his daughter Fatimah, her husband Ali, and their two children Hasan and Husayn—the first family of Shiism—greeting a Christian delegation from Najran in southwestern Arabia, an illustration of a well-known half-legendary event in the Islamization of the Arabian peninsula. All these personages are dressed in fancy clothes modeled on courtly vestments of the time, without any distinguishing or sacralizing sign.

The same is true of an even more remarkable series of representations of the Prophet found in the other manuscript of the time, dated 1314–1315, also in Edinburgh. It is a copy (only fragments remain from it) made in Tabriz of a world history, a *Compendium of Histories*, gathered by Rashid al-Din, the great vizier of the Mongol regime. There are no less than six preserved illustrations of the life of Muhammad, including his birth, his dramatic visit to Mecca as a young adult, the archangel Gabriel informing him of his vocation as a Prophet of God, and a stunning representation of his ascension into heaven, about which more will be said below. None of these images are given any formal, codicological, or iconographic features that would separate them from standard illustrations of historical texts.

This sort of inclusion of Muhammad within a broader body of illustrated material continued over the centuries, and in the sixteenth century it acquired a new vehicle in the *Qisas al-Anbiya*, or *Stories of the Prophets*, originally written in Arabic, and frequently illustrated in Persian or Turkish versions, many copies of which exist in most collections of manuscripts. Illustrations dealing with Muhammad are usually small in number, when compared with those that depict Moses, Joseph, or Jesus and many minor prophets from what is now called the "Abrahamic" tradition; and nothing distinguishes them in particular. They play a minor role in a genre that itself turned out to be relatively secondary in the tradition of painting in Muslim lands, which developed so brilliantly in the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries. But the important fact is that they existed, and there is no evidence that these images were criticized within the presumably religious milieu that created them. They must have fulfilled some purpose in the piety and the instruction of some faithful, though we do not know what that purpose was.

Something else also began in the early fourteenth century. In an album in Istanbul there is a remarkable series of large and beautiful miniatures depicting, without a remaining explanatory text, several episodes from a story that developed quite early within the Muslim religious system—the story of the Prophet's Night Journey to the *masjid al-aqsa*, the "farthest mosque," usually identified with Jerusalem, and then his ascension (*mi'raj*) to heaven and his encounter with God. At roughly the same time, in the early fifteenth century, a text known primarily by its Persian name as the *Mi'rajnameh*, or *Book of the Ascension*, was produced, based on earlier—and mostly Arabic—versions that have not been preserved or have not yet been discovered. The Persian text exists in several copies. The most spectacular of these, in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, was written in 1436 in chaghatai, the Turkic language of the military class of Turks and Mongols who ruled over most of the Islamic world east of the Mediterranean. It depicts every detail of the Prophet's journey: his meeting with all other prophets, his seeing the tortures inflicted in hell as well as the rewards of Paradise, and his eventual encounter in a cloud of gold with

Scirocco: *Othello* in Venice

Sandy heat of summer,
each putrid grain imbedded in sweat:

no breeze
in the courtyard of the Palazzo Ducale

where my mother's perfume almost obliterates
the Venetian stench. Powdered and scented, we ready

for the open-air opera, my mother and I, Mario
poised between us

as winds and strings intimate
the coming storm

and stage lights crash over the grand marble staircase
inaugurating the season of deceit.

In the dark Mario's expert fingers
forage in the folds of mother's skirt.

Cymbals and drums confirm it all.

We follow the Moor who in his innocence
believes himself a cuckold but is not

while my father in his innocence
trusts and is betrayed.

I am evil
because I am a man

sings Iago
that summer night in 1966,

the Istrian stone gleaming
pure under the stars.

Dio crudel,
keep me silent—

to Iago's god I pray:
keep father safe in Sumatra

with no one to lead him
to the Venetian light.

MARGARET BOYERS

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the divine presence. The images are clear and direct, and of very high technical quality. The Prophet is consistently depicted with a crown on his head and riding the mythical beast Buraq, and he is preceded everywhere by the flying archangel Gabriel.

This manuscript is unique for the quality and the quantity of its images, but other "Books of Ascension" exist, some with a few illustrations. Yet there was one image created for the *Mi'rajnameh* that appeared in manuscripts of many other texts, sometimes with a minimum of inspiration from whatever passage seems to have been illustrated. This image shows a brilliantly lit sky, sometimes with clouds and sometimes with stars, and against the sky there is the Prophet on his mythical beast rising up into the heavens, with a host of angels holding lamps, crowns, and various gifts surrounding him. It is a heroic and brilliant procession which, owing to the consistent repetition of its details and the consistency of composition and colors, comes as close to being an icon as can be imagined within the Islamic world, even though it is found most of the time within the context of secular or mystical poetry.

Sometime in the fifteenth century, and certainly by the sixteenth century, it became customary to veil the face of the Prophet. The reasons for this veiling have not been clarified, but they seem to have arisen less from a formal decision by legal scholars than from a piety that, while not averse to the representation of human beings, concluded that the Prophet's uniqueness could best be expressed by making his face invisible. This procedure was then extended to all Shiite leaders, such as Ali and Husayn, and occasionally to other figures as well. What all of this seems to mean is that the representations of holy figures were distinguished from all other representations by the hiding of their faces. Again, the decision to do so was certainly not a legal or learned one, but the expression of a religious desire to emphasize the uniqueness of the person by concealing his physical presence. It was only then, in the sixteenth century, that such images of the Prophet visually separated him from the rest of mankind.

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were also the times when, especially in India, mementos of holy figures, especially Shiite ones, increased drastically. Images of Muhammad existed among them, but neither in number nor in aesthetic quality did they resemble the images of Ali or his children. Yet something quite different transpired in the Sunni world, especially in the Ottoman empire. Relics of the Prophet were collected (and are still kept in the Istanbul museum located in the imperial palace), though nothing comparable in size or brilliance to Christian or Buddhist relics. There also developed a special genre of highly decorated sheets of paper, known as *hilyes*, which contained descriptions of the Prophet's features and qualities, and praises for his beauty and his nobility.

Prophet Muhammad's Night Journey, from the dispersed Falnama, Iran, mid-1550s–early 1560s

Some of these sheets of paper included, on the upper part of the page, a small portrait of the Prophet, usually shown as a distinguished man of middle years with a simple turban. These portraits were not the norm, but there does not seem to have been anything argued against them. *Hilyes* were hung on walls or kept in private treasuries as signs of piety and as ways to recall the unique physical form, personality, and character of the Prophet. It is probable that, in our own times, contemporary technology has been used to continue the manufacture of such souvenirs.

What, then, can one deduce from all these examples? For a start, there can be no doubt that, especially from the thirteenth century onward, the Muslim world accepted the existence of representations of the Prophet. This iconography was not common, and was usually restricted to the accompaniment of a narrative text, or to serve as pious reminders of an exemplary life. There seems to have been no judicial ruling approving or opposing them, but their relative paucity may reflect the long-standing cultural aniconism of a system of faith that was surrounded by religions and cultures in which images played a major role. It should be added that these images, and the references to them, are far more frequently Shiite than Sunni, and very few of them come from the Arab world.

Two details merit special attention, even though we do not quite understand the intellectual and psychological mechanisms that led to them. One is the striking development of ascension (*mi'raj*) images as works of art rather than as mere illustrations. It is perhaps not an accident that some scholars over a century ago saw in these images of the Prophet, and in the story on which they are based, an inspiration for Dante's *Divine Comedy*, although this suggestion is less popular in recent scholarship. The other detail is the eventual predominance of images in which the Prophet's face is veiled, thereby suggesting that images of people are acceptable but that the face of holiness must not be shown. This phenomenon is of considerable interest for any general theory of ways to represent the holy.

To the extent that the argument against the so-called cartoons has centered on the legal propriety or impropriety of representing the Prophet Muhammad, it has been a pointless argument. Of course it is possible to question the Danish caricatures on grounds of taste, or social or political intent; but the lack of taste is not a legal category, and mischievous or even evil intent is difficult to discern in the absence of clearly stated moral and philosophical principles. The only certain lesson to draw from the sad story of the Danish cartoons is the almost universal prevalence of ignorance and incompetence—and that everyone, from writers and pundits to the leaders of mobs, should learn more before making a judgment or starting a riot. ◆

COURTESY ARTHUR M. SACKLER GALLERY

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Enrique Krauze

IN THE SHADOW OF THE PATRIARCH

Gabriel García Márquez and the demons of his time.

All dictators, from Creon onwards, are victims.—Gabriel García Márquez

I.

Many years later, in the course of writing his memoirs, Gabriel García Márquez was to remember that distant afternoon in Aracataca, in Colombia, when his grandfather set a dictionary in his lap and said, "Not only does this book know everything, it's the only one that's never wrong." The boy asked, "How many words are in it?" "All of them," his grandfather replied.

Anywhere in the world, if a grandfather presents his grandson with a dictionary, he is giving him a great instrument of knowledge; but Colombia was not just anywhere. It was a republic of grammarians. During the youth of García Márquez's grandfather, Colonel Nicolás Márquez Mejía, who was born in 1864 and died in 1936, a number of presidents and government ministers—almost all of them lawyers from the conservative camp—published dictionaries, language textbooks, and treatises (in prose and verse) on orthology, orthography, philology, lexicography, meter, prosody, and Castilian grammar. Malcolm Deas, a scholar of Colombian history who has studied this singular phenomenon, claims that the obsession with language that was expressed by the cultivation of these sciences—their practitioners, Deas notes, insisted on calling them "sciences"—had its origin in the urge for continuity with the cultural heritage of Spain. By claiming "Spain's eternal presence in the language," Colombians sought to possess its traditions, its history, its classic authors, its Latin roots. This appropriation, preceded by the foundation in 1871 of the Colombian Academy of Language, the first offshoot in America of the Royal Spanish Academy, was one of the keys to the long period of conservative hegemony—it lasted from 1886 to 1930—in Colombian political history.

García Márquez's grandfather is a prominent figure in the writer's early novels, and he was no stranger to this politico-grammatical history. Colonel Nicolás Márquez Mejía fought in the ranks of the legendary Liberal general Rafael Uribe Uribe (1859–1914), one of the few caudillos in Colombian history. His story in turn inspired the character of Colonel Aureliano Buendía in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. A tireless and hapless combatant in three civil wars, Uribe Uribe was also a diligent grammarian and a soldier in the civic battles between conservatives and liberals. During one of his stays in prison he translated Herbert Spencer, and in 1887 he wrote the *Diccionario abreviado de galicismos, provincialismos y correcciones de lenguaje,* or *Abbreviated Dictionary of Gallicisms, Provincialisms, and Proper Usage*, which seems to have been a moderate success.

GABRIEL GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ: A LIFE
By Gerald Martin
(Alfred A. Knopf, 642 pp., $37.50)

FIDEL AND GABO: A PORTRAIT OF THE LEGENDARY FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN FIDEL CASTRO AND GABRIEL GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ
By Ángel Esteban and Stéphanie Panichelli
Translated by Diane Stockwell
(Pegasus, 304 pp., $26)

In 1896 the general stood alone in Parliament against sixty conservative senators. Finally the crushing majority left him no choice but—in his own words—to "give voice to the cannons." Uribe Uribe was the protagonist of the bloody Thousand Days War in 1899–1902, which ended with the signing of the Peace of Neerlandia. The signing was witnessed by Colonel Márquez, who, years later, would receive his former general at the family home in Aracataca, near the scene of the events. Uribe Uribe was assassinated in 1914. Two decades later, his lieutenant presented his eldest grandson not with a sword or a pistol, but with a dictionary. This tome that anywhere else would be an instrument of knowledge was, in Colombia, an instrument of power.

Power would indeed come to García Márquez through the literary arts, but not in his wildest tropical dreams could Colonel Márquez have imagined the prodigious *ars combinatoria* that his grandson—whom he called "my little Napoleon"—would apply to that dictionary, the "almost two thousand big, crowded pages, beautifully illustrated" that "Gabito" set out to read "in alphabetical order, with little understanding." García Márquez won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1982, and his most important novels have been translated into many languages. With their extraordinary force of storytelling, their poetic charm, their prose so flexible and rich that at moments it actually seems to contain all the words in the dictionary, these books are read everywhere, and rightly. His hometown is the site of literary pilgrimages. In Cartagena de Indias, the walled port city where the young reporter García Márquez endured years of hardship, the taxi drivers point out the "Prize House," one of several that "Gabo" owns in cities around the world. The fond nickname reflects the popular sympathy that he inspires.

In 1996, García Márquez settled an old score in Colombian history, heading a small revolution against the dictatorship of dictionaries. To the horror of the Royal Spanish Academy and its American counterparts gathered in Zacatecas, Mexico, the celebrated author—lord and master of "Spain's eternal presence in the language"—declared himself in favor of the abolition of spelling. The snub was the final victory of liberal Colombian radicalism over conservative grammatical hegemony. The ghosts of General Uribe Uribe and Colonel Márquez smiled in satisfaction.

And Fidel Castro smiled, too. On his seventieth birthday he received from García Márquez the most "fascinating" of gifts, a "real jewel": a dictionary. "I write so my friends will love me," García Márquez has said repeatedly. One of those friends is the dictator of Cuba. In Latin American history, no bond between pen and scepter has been as strong, as intimate, as enduring, as mutually beneficial, as the alliance between Fidel and Gabo. In 1915, when the great Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío (an important influence on

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García Márquez) was old, ailing, and in need of assistance, he accepted the pandering support of the Guatemalan dictator Manuel Estrada Cabrera and even dedicated some laudatory poems to him. Castro's political motives for his public association with the great writer are not hard to understand, and as clear as those of Estrada Cabrera: he seeks the dividends of legitimacy. But what motivates García Márquez, who is hardly in the same straits as old Darío?

Now, thanks to this voluminous biography by Gerald Martin, the psychological origins of this extraordinary relationship are beginning to surface. They hark back to the family house in Aracataca, and, in particular, to the bond between Gabito and his personal patriarch, Colonel Márquez. Therein lies the seed of his fascination with power: coded, elusive, but magically real, like the story of the dictionary passed from the Colombian colonel to the Cuban caudillo through the hands of the writer.

"Life is not what one lived but what one remembers and how one remembers it in order to recount it," writes García Márquez in the epigraph to his memoirs. This is how he has remembered, re-worked, and in various ways re-told a tragic incident in his grandfather's life. It took place in 1908, in the city of Barrancas. García Márquez mentions it in *Living to Tell the Tale* as a "duel," an "affair of honor" in which the colonel had no choice but to confront an old friend and former lieutenant. The man was "a giant sixteen years younger than he was," married and the father of two children, and his name was Medardo Pacheco. The quarrel—in this version—began with "a base remark" about Medardo's mother that was "attributed" to García Márquez's grandfather. The "public explanations" for the affront failed to assuage Medardo's vociferous rage, and the colonel, his "honor wounded," challenged Medardo to a duel to the death. There was "no fixed date," and it took him six months to settle his affairs and assure his family's future before he went off to meet his fate. "Both men were armed," García Márquez notes. The mortally wounded Medardo collapsed into "the underbrush with a wordless sob."

A previous version of this story, told in an interview with Mario Vargas Llosa, omits the duel: "At some point he had to kill a man, when he was very young … it seems there was someone who kept hounding him and challenging him, but he took no notice until the situation became so difficult that he simply put a bullet in him." According to García Márquez, the town was on his grandfather's side, so much so that one of the dead man's brothers slept "at the door to the house, in front of my grandfather's door, to prevent the family from coming to avenge his death."

"You don't know how a dead man weighs on you," his grandfather repeated, unburdening himself to Gabito, who listened raptly to his war stories, and who has emphasized the importance of this episode in his life: "It was the first incident from real life that stirred my writer's instincts and I still have not been able to exorcise it." Precisely in order to exorcise it, he chose to re-create it not as it was lived but as "one remembers it in order to recount it." Perhaps the first literary re-working of the incident came in 1965, in his script for the film *Time to Die,* by the Mexican filmmaker Arturo Ripstein. After languishing for years in prison, Juan Sáyago returns to the town where he killed another man, Raúl Trueba, after a horse race. Sáyago seeks to rebuild his house and win back the woman he left behind, but the dead man's sons, convinced that the killing was treacherous, have been waiting for him all this time to have their revenge. The script absolves the protagonist: "Sáyago didn't kill an unarmed man"; he didn't kill "dishonorably"; "he killed him face to face, the way men kill." In the end Sáyago has no choice but to kill one of Trueba's sons, face to face, and then he is shot—in the back, unarmed, dishonorably—by the other.

The same scene recurs in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, transformed into a cockfight, after which Aureliano Buendía orders the insolent Prudencio Aguilar to find a weapon so that they may confront each other on equal footing. Only then can he kill Aguilar with a sure thrust of his spear. Like Colonel Márquez in real life, the first Aureliano embarks on an exodus with his family that leads him to found a new town: the real Aracataca, the magical Macondo. But new horizons do not dissipate the shame. Both characters, real and imaginary, live in the grip of "terrible remorse." And both refuse to repent, and repeat: "I'd do it all over again."

After interviewing the descendants of eyewitnesses, Gerald Martin reconstructs a diametrically different version. "There was nothing remotely heroic about it," he concludes. Medardo's mother was the spurned lover of the boastful colonel; the offended son wanted to cleanse his honor; Márquez (who was forty-four years old at the time) chose "the time, the place, and the manner of the final showdown." He killed Medardo dishonorably: Medardo was unarmed. In Magdalena's *Departmental Gazette* for that November, which Martin consulted, the colonel's imprisonment for "homicide" is mentioned. After a stay in jail, like his literary avatars, he did not return to Barrancas (where he would surely have received the same treatment as Juan Sáyago), but instead set out on the momentous journey to Aracataca, in the hope that the new banana bonanza would bring him prosperity and oblivion.

The bond between grandfather and grandson—researched in detail by Martin—explains the grandson's need to create that original fiction and to cling to it. "We were always together," remembers García Márquez in his memoirs. They even dressed alike. At home "the only men were my grandfather and me." Separated in early childhood from his parents and surrounded by a herd of "evangelical women"—his grandmother, his aunts, Indian maids—"for me, grandfather was complete security. Only with him did my doubts disappear and did I feel my feet firmly on the ground and myself well established in real life." "Beached in the nostalgia" of that stout and half-blind old man with his black-rimmed spectacles, the grandfather who celebrated his grandson's "birthday" each month and praised his precocious talent as a storyteller and made him retell the plots of movies when he came home from the theater, García Márquez viewed his grandfather with a worshipful and indulgent sentimentalism, as the incarnation of love and power. "I was eight when he died … something of me died with him … since then nothing important has happened to me." In Martin's opinion, this was no exaggeration: "One of the strongest impulses in García Márquez's later life was the desire to restore himself to his grandfather's world," which meant inheriting "the old man's memories, his philosophy of life and political morality," a political morality that fit into a single phrase: "I'd do it all over again."

Gabriel García Márquez's political consciousness was formed early, by the time he turned twenty, along with his impulse for invention. Here is another one of them. It concerns the literary and autobiographical representation of the United Fruit Company. In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, as in *Living to Tell the Tale*, Aracataca is not just a company town (with its plantations, railroads, telegraph offices, ports, hospitals, and fleets), but also the scene of the "Biblical curse" of Yankee imperialism, a sweeping historical force whose "messianic inspiration" stirred the

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hopes of thousands (among them García Márquez's grandparents) only to befoul the waters of the original paradise, disturb its peace, and exploit its people. In its wake, this "plague" left behind only the "leaf-trash," the "scraps of the scraps it had brought us." At the start of his memoirs, recalling his return to the place of his birth with his mother at mid-century, García Márquez portrays his childhood surroundings as a Caribbean apartheid: the "private ... forbidden city" of the gringos, with their "slow blue lawns with peacocks and quail, the houses with red roofs and screens on the windows and little round tables with folding chairs for eating, among palm trees and dusty rose bushes.... These were fleeting visions of a remote and unlikely world that was off limits to us mortals."

Are these historical facts, or good stories? Lived reality, or reality re-worked in order to be told? The main driving force behind the company was none other than General Uribe Uribe, who was a former agent of the New York Life Insurance Company, and an economics professor who devoutly believed in the market economy and in agriculture for export. The legendary soldier also owned one of the biggest coffee plantations in Antioquia. Martin makes no mention of these facts, but notes that Uribe Uribe's comrade Colonel Márquez, the writer's saintly grandfather, was in fact one of the first beneficiaries of this foreign investment. His nice house in Aracataca may not have had a pool or a tennis court, but it had cement floors, and it was one of the biggest houses in town. Since he was the municipal tax collector, "the Colonel's own income depended heavily on the financial well-being, physical intoxication and resultant sexual promiscuity of the much despised 'leaf-trash.' How conscientiously Nicolás carried out his duties we cannot know but the system was not one which left much freedom for personal probity." The colonel—Martin notes—oversaw establishments called *academias*, "where both liquor and sex were freely available" and through which must have passed the "unlikely whores" who would serve as inspiration for his grandson's stories and novels all the way through to his last novel, *Memories of My Melancholy Whores*.

Swept up by the force of the "remembered" version in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Martin overlooks the family's ambiguous relationship with the United Fruit Company—a love-hate relationship, typical of Caribbean attitudes toward the Yankees. The company was condemned for its abandonment of the townspeople, but not for its existence. In his memoirs García Márquez notes that his mother, Luisa Santiaga (the real-life version of Úrsula in the famous novel), "yearned for the golden age of the banana company"—that is, for her days as a "rich girl," her clavichord classes, dance classes, English classes. And he himself confessed that he missed his pretty teacher at the Montessori school and his shopping trips with his grandfather.

The truth is that the banana company brought with it much more than leaf-trash. As the anthropologist Catherine C. Legrand explains, the enclave was a melting pot of cosmopolitanism and localism, of "green gold" and witchcraft, of Parker pens, Vicks VapoRub, Quaker Oats, Colgate toothpaste, of Chevrolets and Fords, of magic potions and homeopathic medicine (like that practiced by Eligio, Gabito's erratic, impecunious, and absent father), of Rosicrucian books and Catholic missals, of Masons and theosophists, of demonic tales and modern inventions, of craftsmen and professionals, of residents with centuries-long roots on the coast and immigrants from Italy, Spain, Syria, and Lebanon. García Márquez's mother would have liked that "false splendor" to last forever. That is why, in the memoirs, when she sees the square where the massacre took place, she says to her son: "That's where the world ended." The world she meant was *her* world. Paradise did not pre-date the company. Paradise was the world created with the arrival of the company—a tropical alchemy that García Márquez would re-create in his first novels, and, notably, in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

And after the memory of apartheid came that of apocalypse. In 1928, at the request of United Fruit, federal troops opened fire on a gathering of striking workers at the station in Ciénaga, very near Aracataca, where Gabriel García Márquez, who was born the previous year, lived with his grandparents. Hundreds were killed. The slaughter—re-created hyperbolically in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*—sullied the reputation of the conservative regime and paved the way after 1930 for a series of liberal governments whose important social reforms would encounter opposition from conservatives, who adopted ever more reactionary positions. For the elections of 1946, the dominant liberal party split into two factions, one moderate, in support of Gabriel Turbay, and the other radical, behind charismatic leader Jorge Eliécer Gaitán. In his popular anti-imperialist harangues, Gaitán made constant reference to the massacre of 1928, which he had investigated and denounced at the time as a member of parliament. Then, against the backdrop of the ninth Pan-American Conference held in Bogotá on April 9, 1948, Gaitán was assassinated. The episode was known as "El Bogotazo" and was the starting point of a decade of social and political violence known as "La violencia." The young law student Gabriel García Márquez lived the tragedy up close. It was his "political Damascus"—as it was for Castro, who was also in Bogotá at the time. It fueled his hatred of American imperialism and awakened his communist sympathies.

In addition to these two autobiographical and literary re-workings—the glorification of the colonel and the demonization of the banana company—there took shape in the young writer's political consciousness a mistrust of representative democracy and republican values. Martin seems to share it: "Colombia is a curious country in which the two major parties have ostensibly been bitter enemies for almost two centuries yet have tacitly united to ensure that the people never receive genuine representation." This idea of Colombia as a sham republic is also a re-working that does not correspond to reality. From the earliest decades of the nineteenth century, people in the remotest places in Colombia have been exercised by national politics, taking part in clean and competitive elections, with a real separation of powers, and enjoying—at least in the twentieth century—significant liberties. Except for the fleeting episode of General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla in the 1950s, Colombians have not countenanced coups or dictatorships. It is probably not an exaggeration to say that no other country in the region (not even Chile, Uruguay, Costa Rica, or Venezuela in the second half of the twentieth century, until the arrival of Chávez) has experimented more tenaciously with democracy.

And yet violence seems second nature in Colombia. The main reason for this violence was the discord between liberals and conservatives—a quarrel of political, economic, social, and religious values dating back to the nineteenth century in Latin America. Despite its republican and civil tendencies, Colombia failed to find a formula for stability, and dragged its internecine political and cultural conflict out to the point of exhaustion. In Colombia, the legalist and formal traditions of the reigning grammarians were overturned time and again by the call to arms. "In Colombia," declared President Rafael Nuñez at the end of the nineteenth century, "we have institutionalized anarchy."

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This incapacity for peace was manifested once more in the "Bogotazo" of 1948, planting in the young García Márquez an iron sense of the futility of liberal and conservative ideologies. Like Colonel Aureliano Buendía, he came to believe that "the only real difference between liberals and conservatives is that liberals attend the five o'clock mass and conservatives attend the eight o'clock mass." He forever after concurred with Simón Bolívar's famous statement that "I am convinced to the marrow of my bones that only an able despotism can rule in America." An able despot, a *good* patriarch, a new and anti-imperialist Uribe Uribe: that would become Gabito's ideal. To find it, he would embark on a long and difficult path. And instead of cannons, his tools would be words, just as his grandfather wanted.

II.

Gabriel García Márquez: A Life is an authorized biography, the official version of the writer's literary and political saga. The book is divided into three sections. The first, centered on Colombia from 1899 to 1955, overlaps to a certain degree with *Living to Tell the Tale*, but it freshens up the family history with new information, and sketches each inhabitant of the extended family in the house of Aracataca, and provides a detailed reconstruction of student life at the prestigious school of San José. It touches on the few joys and the many sorrows of Gárcia Márquez's family, enriched and impoverished each year by the arrival of a new sibling. And above all, it describes the vicissitudes of a penniless young man in a succession of cities (Cartagena, Barranquilla, Bogotá), surrounded by journalist friends and literary mentors, passionately committed to pursuing a life as a writer, whether by selling encyclopedias or adapting radio soap operas.

Curiously, Martin almost entirely bypasses the cultural context in which García Márquez grew up—the open and happy stamp of the Caribbean, with its extraordinary liberalism, its carnivalesque sensuality, its idolatry of poetry, its musicality, its propensity for outrageous jokes, black magic, and easy death. He somewhat exaggerates the richness and the complexity of García Márquez's literary education, which seems to have been limited to Darío and the Spanish Golden Age, quite a bit of Faulkner and Hemingway, some Kafka, almost nothing of the "scandalous" Freud, and even less of the "tortuous" Mann. And Martin almost completely ignores García Márquez's vast journalistic writing.

Although very few letters or primary documents from private or public archives are cited in his book, Martin—known to the García Márquez clan as "Tío Jeral," as he says in his prologue—spent seventeen years interviewing more than five hundred people: family members, friends, colleagues, editors, biographers, hagiographers, and academics (most of them inclined in the writer's favor). These testimonies are vivid and sometimes dubious. Some irrefutable firsthand accounts, like that of García Márquez's all-time friend, the intellectual and diplomat Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza, confirm the young writer's crushing poverty—but did he really live in a room of only ten square feet? Did he really accustom himself to a "virtual disregard of his own bodily needs"? And elsewhere, did he really sleep with the wife of a military man who, upon discovering him in the act, forgave him out of gratitude to his homeopath father? Did he write *Leaf Storm*, his first novel about Macondo, inspired by the trip with his mother to Aracataca? And did this trip—so strikingly similar, as Martin suggests in a note, to the journey at the start of *Pedro Páramo*, the novel by Juan Rulfo that was key in setting the tone for *One Hundred Years of Solitude*—really take place in 1950, and was it as crucial to his work as his memoirs indicate? A letter not mentioned by Martin, dated March 1952 and published in *Textos costeños* (García Márquez's first volume of journalism), seems to suggest otherwise:

> I've just returned from Aracataca. It's still a dusty village, full of silence and the dead. Unsettling; almost overwhelmingly so, with its old colonels dying in their yards, under the last banana trees, and an impressive number of sixty-year-old virgins, rusty, sweating out the last vestiges of sex at the drowsy hour of two in the afternoon. This time I chanced it, but I don't think I'll go back alone, especially after *Leaf Storm* comes out and the old colonels decide to get out their guns and fight a personal and exclusive civil war against me.

Martin's second section follows his hero from his European wanderings and his time in Paris in 1955–1957 through his marriage in 1958 to Mercedes Barcha—the shrewd and patient sweetheart of his adolescence—and his adventures in New York as a reporter for *Prensa Latina*, the Cuban news agency created after Castro's triumph, up to the year 1961, when he settled for good in Mexico, a hospitable country (happily authoritarian, anti-imperialist, and orderly, at least at the time). There his two sons, Rodrigo and Gonzalo, were born, and there for the first time he made a decent and reliable living at a couple of American advertising agencies (J. Walter Thompson and McCann Erickson) and successfully headed two commercial magazines (*La familia* and *Sucesos para todos*). He also tried his luck in the film business and published *No One Writes to the Colonel*. In Mexico he renewed old friendships (especially with Álvaro Mutis) and started many new ones, no less generous and long-lasting (for example, with Carlos Fuentes), bought his own house and car, enrolled his sons in a British school, was menaced by writer's block, feared being a victim of a "good situation," and finally, in 1967, at the age of forty, surprised generations of readers with the appearance of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

"Everyone has three lives, a public life, a private life, a secret life," García Márquez warned his biographer. Beyond the notable revelation about the writer's grandfather, Martin's book unravels only a single episode in García Márquez's "secret life": his relationship in Paris—before his marriage, of course—with an aspiring Spanish actress. Stormy and ill-fated, this affair was important not only in itself but as inspiration for *No One Writes to the Colonel* and the disturbing short story "The Trail of Your Blood in the Snow." But other aspects of his "secret life" remain in shadows. Why did he suddenly break off his relationship with *Prensa Latina*? Only the Cuban archives, if they are ever opened, can shed light on that. What was the arc of his long epistolary engagement to Mercedes? Impossible to know: both claim to have burned their letters. How did his ties to his fellow writers evolve? Except for the letters exchanged with Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza and a few others, the available literary archives were not consulted by Martin.

The account of the European "private life" of the bohemian writer, who loved to sing and dance, contains touching anecdotes. Is it true that he "collected bottles and old newspapers and one day had to beg in the Metro"? The truth, as Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza points out, is that García Márquez seemed totally uninterested in the experience of Europe. He lived insularly, immersed in his own projects. According to Martin, "it is striking how much of Europe East and West he managed to see," but García Márquez himself corrected Martin: "I just drifted for two years, I just attended to my emotions, my inner world."

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Where "public life" is concerned, Martin does cover the journalist García Márquez—in those days a star reporter for the Colombian newspaper *El Espectador*—as he makes his way through East Germany, Poland, Hungary, and the Soviet Union. He notes, for example, the writer's strange fascination with Stalin's embalmed corpse: "nothing impressed me so much as the delicacy of his hands, with their thin transparent nails. They are the hands of a woman." In no way did he resemble "the heartless character whom Nikita Khrushchev denounced in a terrible rant." Martin also records García Márquez's "intoxication" at the physical proximity of János Kádár, the man who suppressed the Hungarian uprising, whose deeds he strives to justify. Upon learning of the execution of the rebel leader Imre Nagy, García Márquez criticizes the act not in moral terms, but as a "political mistake." "It should perhaps not surprise us," says Martin, in one of his few moments of critical boldness, "that the man who wrote it, who at the time clearly believes that there are 'right' and 'wrong' men for particular situations and who quite cold-bloodedly puts politics before morality, should eventually support an 'irreplaceable' leader like Castro through thick and thin."

The pages dedicated to the writing of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* are genuinely exciting, but Martin's conclusion seems excessive. He calls the novel

> a work—a mirror—in which his own continent at last recognizes itself, and thus founds a tradition. If it was Borges who designed the viewfinder (like a belated brother Lumière), it is García Márquez who provides the first truly great collective portrait. So Latin Americans would not only recognize themselves but would now be recognized everywhere, universally.

At the time, the enthusiasm with which we all read that extraordinary novel did in fact cause it to be regarded as a kind of Bible (as Fuentes maintained), or at least an "American Amadis" (this was Vargas Llosa's phrase); but the truth is that García Márquez's world could not possibly be called the mirror of *all* Latin America. At least two essential elements were missing from his fictional account: the indigenous dimension and the Catholic faith.

Still, it was an incredible mirror of the Caribbean, which is no small thing. Yet the opinions were not unanimously glowing. Borges commented that "*One Hundred Years of Solitude* is all right, but it would be better if it was twenty or thirty years shorter." And Octavio Paz's verdict was also harsh: "García Márquez's prose is essentially academic, a compromise between journalism and fantasy. Watered-down poetry. He is the continuation of two currents in Latin America: the rural epic and the fantastic novel. He is not untalented, but he is a dilutor." Martin tends to omit these literary critiques, and to dismiss criticism (by Guillermo Cabrera Infante and later by Vargas Llosa himself) of García Márquez's Castroism, chalking it up to ideological bias and a murky envy of the author of the novel that, according to Martin, "is the axis of Latin America's twentieth-century literature, the continent's only undisputable world-historical and world-canonical novel."

The truth is that beginning with the third section of the book, "Celebrity and Politics: 1967–2005," Martin loses his distance. Though he continues to give a lively account of the circumstances in which the subsequent novels were created—the old obsession with power crystallized in *The Autumn of the Patriarch*, the memory of a real incident witnessed in Sincé by Mercedes in *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, his parents' idyll in *Love in the Time of Cholera*—Martin does not deviate from García Márquez's official script. The book begins to read like a vast gossip column. "Private life" bows to "public life": page after page is devoted to an avalanche of dinners, lunches, parties, interviews, declarations, jokes, travels, hotels, restaurants, theaters, birthday parties, Christmas parties, bohemian soirées; a parade of kings, princes, presidents, actresses and actors, artists, writers, members of the avant-garde. Ten *Hello!*-worthy pages devoted to the Nobel Prize ceremony. Even Gabo's keenest fans might weary of the passages describing his long march toward the seat of honor that Martin, in his epilogue, calls "Immortality: The New Cervantes." García Márquez claims to have emerged from this labyrinth by putting his fame at the service of a higher and nobler cause. It was the Cuban Revolution.

III.

In the beginning was the representation of power: in the short novels, in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (with its old colonels, lonely and despondent, "beyond glory and the nostalgia for glory") and finally, in 1975, in *The Autumn of the Patriarch*, García Márquez's own favorite among his books, which, according to the writer himself, was a confession. Martin takes him at his word. The ambitious patriarch, lustful, repugnant, cruel, solitary—above all, solitary—is García Márquez himself, "a very famous writer who is terribly uncomfortable with his fame," and who seeks to unburden himself through an autobiographical book in which the prevailing spirit is a moral striving toward "self-criticism."

The Autumn of the Patriarch was not the first novel about tropical dictators written in Spanish in the twentieth century. There was *The Tyrant Banderas* (1926), by the Spanish writer Ramón del Valle-Inclán, and *Mr. President* (1946), by the Guatemalan writer Miguel Ángel Asturias (who won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1967). In early 1968, according to the Guatemalan writer Augusto Monterroso, a number of Latin American writers—Monterroso mentions Fuentes, Vargas Llosa, Cortázar, Donoso, Roa Bastos, Alejo Carpentier, but not Gabriel García Márquez—devised a plan to publish books about the dictators of their respective countries. The project was not carried out. "I was afraid I would end up 'understanding' and 'feeling pity' for him," argued Monterroso, who would have had the grim task of portraying Somoza.

Against this background, it would seem that García Márquez undertook the eventual writing of his dictator novel more in a spirit of competition than contrition. He had spent years turning it over in his head, and he had produced extensive drafts. He would "teach" Asturias and the others "how to write a real dictator novel." And if *The Autumn of the Patriarch* proved anything, it is that the subject of tyranny makes a good fit with the expressive demands of magical realism.

The abruptness and the arbitrariness of the dictator, his use of power as a form of personal expression, his Dionysian intoxication with his own strength, are natural variations on the magic-real. The patriarch "only knew how to express his most intimate yearnings through the visible symbols of his colossal power." He aspired to be a historical and even cosmic thaumaturge, to alter the forces of nature and the course of time, to twist reality. In a way García Márquez's patriarch is reminiscent of Camus's *Caligula*: "Behold the only free being in all of the Roman empire. Rejoice: at last an emperor has come to teach them freedom.… I live, kill, wield the rapturous power of the destroyer, next to which the power of the creator seems a caricature."

These excesses form part of the reality, and the memory, of many countries. The esteemed Venezuelan writer Alejandro Rossi knew something about this "inherited iconography." Writing in 1975, and not inclined toward magical realism in its

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most "adolescent and elemental" form, as it manifests itself occasionally in *The Autumn of the Patriarch*, Rossi praised the "intense and beautifully crafted images," the "intricacies and art" of the prose, and the "often perfect rhythms" of the work—but he objected to its substance:

> The incorporation of so many familiar elements turns the book into an elaborate and brilliant exercise that nevertheless does not change our historical and psychological view of dictatorship. *The Autumn of the Patriarch* aesthetically explores a worn-out and exhausted vision of ourselves. García Márquez's skill and unquestionable stylistic accomplishments almost never transform the underlying substance, which remains buried in the novel's cellar, untouched by any literary spark. In that sense it is a Baroque book . . . a sealed literary net that sometimes—though with perfect manners—suffocates its narrative subject matter.

The plot of the novel is a record of the tyrant's subjectivity: his nostalgias, his fears, his sentiments. And the simplicity of his inner world is morally offensive: only rarely does the reader encounter reflections on the obligations and the dilemmas of power, or ruminations on evil, debasement, or cynicism, much less a hint of a crisis of conscience. The top slot in the dictator's consciousness is reserved for his private woes: the sacrifices that he made for his mother, the chronicle of his lusts and his "unrequited loves." It would almost seem as if the dictator has no public life, only private passions. In this way the historical figure is curiously exempted from history. Conversely, the characters who surround him have no space of their own: everything they think, say, and do is public life, because it revolves around the dictator. In a story in which the central axis is a despot's lyrical and sentimental *I*, everything else is reduced to a stage on which that *I* unfolds. The victims are props.

If García Márquez bears down on the despot, it is not so as to expose or to analyze the inner complexity of a man of state, but to inspire compassion for a sad, solitary old man. The dictator is a victim of the church, the United States, a lack of love, his enemies, his collaborators, his orphanhood, natural disasters, poor health, ancient ignorance, bad luck. After he rapes a woman, she consoles him. There is also the rest house for dictators who have fallen into disgrace, where they spend their afternoons in exile playing dominoes. Their nostalgia assures them immunity. The novel floridly and sentimentally blurs the reality of power, and turns dictatorship into a melodrama. It de-humanizes the victims and re-humanizes the dictator.

In *The Autumn of the Patriarch*, its prose an overwhelming and uncontainable torrent that sweeps through eras, continents, and characters, the narrative itself becomes autocratic. The book opens with an eighty-seven-page paragraph, an occasionally delicious torment for the reader, that García Márquez justified by saying that "it is a luxury that the author of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* can permit himself." In this book, there is room only for the consciousness of the dictator. Everything happens through, for, and in the perception of the patriarch. He is the omniscient narrator, the author of a country. Other consciousnesses are secondary, derivative, or non-existent. "Devoted to the messianic pleasure of thinking for us . . . he was the only one who knew the true dimensions of our fate," García Márquez writes. And "in the end, we could no longer imagine what we would be without him." "He alone was the nation"—and the novel.

The book differs in many ways from *Mr. President*, which is a rather surrealist novel—poetic, political, revolutionary; but perhaps the main difference is that in Asturias's book one does not hear only the voice of the tyrant. One hears also the voices of "street people." Civilians and military officers speak in anger and in self-criticism, as people with evolving lives of their own. In Asturias's novel their voices are honored, and experiences of prison and torture are described. When showing abuse, corruption, and the whims of power, the tone is not just unequivocally critical, it is also contemptuous. There is no immunity. In *The Autumn of the Patriarch*, by contrast, the victims are part of the scenery. They are never active participants in the story.

"The political aspect of the book is a great deal more complex than it seems and I am not prepared to explain it," García Márquez declared when he finished his novel. Martin does feel prepared to decode it: the "solitary writer" (never mind his endless circle of famous friends) had seen his own face in the mirror and "resolved to be better and to do better now that fame had shown him the truth." This moral ascent consisted of putting his fame at the service of a cause—the Cuban Revolution—headed by a man who, paradoxically, would come to bear a certain resemblance to the man in the mirror. "In this absolutely ruthless cynicism about human beings, power and effect," writes Martin, "we find ourselves forced to consider that power is there to be used and that 'someone has to do this.'" Based on this "Machiavellian" view of history—the adjective, like the logic, is Martin's—the biographer believes that he understands why García Márquez "would go straight . . . to seek a relationship with Fidel Castro, a socialist liberator who was, as it turned out, the Latin American politician with the potential to become the most durable and the most loved of all the continent's authoritarian figures."

A dictator is an authority figure, I suppose; but a very peculiar one. Perhaps *The Autumn of the Patriarch* represented the final exorcism of the story of the writer's grandfather, in which the word "tyrant" softens gently into "patriarch." The patriarch dictates the whole novel, with no periods, commas, or air for anyone to breathe, except for him. It is the novel in which the ghost of Medardo Pacheco, that victim-as-prop complete with spurned mother and ghostly wife and two children, would disappear for all eternity. His voice is silenced, to be heard no more. And after depicting the patriarch in literature, it was time to seek him out in real life. Martin confirms this: it was "Fidel Castro, the only man, his own grandfather figure, against whom he could not, would not dare, would not even wish, to win." From Macondo to Havana: a miracle of magical realism.

Although one of García Márquez's bits of reporterly advice was to "poison the reader with credibility and rhythm," in his vast body of journalism he did not practice magical realism so much as socialist realism. In Spanish his articles fill no fewer than eight fat volumes, from 1948 to 1991. They have not been translated into English, and Martin barely skims them. This is regrettable, considering that this biography is addressed primarily to an English-speaking audience. The first series of García Márquez's journalism is important because it gives a glimpse into the secrets of his "basic exercises," his "literary carpentry." The second (1955–1957), which covers his reporting from Europe and America, has more political content, and receives a little more attention from the biographer. But the key political articles, written between 1974 and 1995 and gathered in *Por la libre* and *Notas de prensa*—one thousand pages in all—are deemed worthy of only minimal commentary, almost always admiring. And this is disastrous.

Three dispatches that Martin considers "memorable," but does not gloss, were written by García Márquez after a long

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stay in Cuba in 1975 and titled "Cuba de cabo a rabo," or "Cuba From One End to the Other." They were published in August/September of that year by the magazine *Alternativa*, founded by García Márquez in Bogotá in 1974. And they were certainly memorable! They professed an absolute faith in the Revolution as it was incarnated in the heroic figure of the Comandante (whom García Márquez had not yet met): "Every Cuban seems to think that if one day no one else were left in Cuba, he alone, under the leadership of Fidel Castro, could carry on the Revolution, bringing it to its happy conclusion. For me, frankly speaking, this realization was the most exciting and important experience I have ever had."

Indeed it was, to such a degree that in thirty-four turbulent years García Márquez has never publicly detached himself from that epiphanic vision. What did he see that anyone could see? Tangible achievements in health care and education, though he did not ask himself whether the maintenance of a totalitarian regime was required in order to attain these social objectives. And what didn't he see? The presence of the Soviet Union, except as a generous purveyor of oil. And what did he say he hadn't seen? "Individual privileges" (although the Castro family had assumed ownership of the island as its personal estate) and "police repression or discrimination of any kind" (although concentration camps existed, since 1965, for homosexuals, religious believers, and dissidents—they were euphemistically called Military Units to Aid Production, or UMAP).

What he saw, in sum, was what he wanted to see: five million Cubans who belonged to the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution, not as the spies and enforcers of the Revolution but as its happy, spontaneous, multitudinous "true force," or, more plainly—in the chilling words of Castro himself, admiringly quoted by García Márquez—"a system of collective revolutionary vigilance that ensures that everybody knows who the man next door is and what he does." He saw many "alimentary and industrial items freely sold in stores" and he prophesied that "in 1980 Cuba will be the first developed country of Latin America." He saw "schools for all," and restaurants "as good as the best in Europe." He saw the "establishment of popular power through universal suffrage by secret ballot from the age of sixteen." He saw a ninety-four-year-old man immersed in his reading "cursing capitalism for all the books he hadn't read."

Most of all, he saw Fidel. He saw "the almost telepathic system of communication" that he had established with people. "His gaze revealed the hidden softness of his childlike heart … he has survived unscathed the harsh and insidious corrosion of daily power, his secret sorrows.… He has set up a whole system of defense against the cult of personality." Owing to all that, and to his "political intelligence, his instincts and his decency, his almost inhuman capacity for work, his deep identification with and absolute confidence in the wisdom of the masses," Castro had managed to achieve the "coveted and elusive" dream of all rulers: "affection."

These virtues were undergirded, in García Márquez's account, by Fidel's "fundamental and most underappreciated skill": his "genius as a reporter." All the great achievements of the Revolution, its origins, its details, its significance, were "chronicled in the speeches of Fidel Castro. Thanks to those great spoken reports, the Cuban people are some of the best informed in the world about their own reality." García Márquez admitted that these speech-pieces "haven't solved the problems of freedom of expression and revolutionary democracy," and the law that prohibited all creative works opposed to the principles of the Revolution struck him as "alarming"—but not, of course, because of its limitations on freedom. No, what troubled him about the repressive law was its futility: "any writer rash enough to write a book against the Revolution shouldn't need to stumble over a constitutional stone … the Revolution will be mature enough to digest it." In his view, the Cuban press was still somewhat deficient in information and critical judgment, but one could "foresee" that it would become "democratic, lively, and original," because it would be built on "a new real democracy … popular power conceived as a pyramidal structure that guarantees the base the constant and immediate control of its leaders." (Years later, in an interview with *The New York Times*, he was asked by Alan Riding why he did not move to Havana, since he traveled there so often. "It would be too difficult to arrive now and adapt to the conditions. I'd miss too many things, I couldn't live with the lack of information.") "Hell, don't believe me," García Márquez concluded. "Go see it for yourself."

Another paradigmatic piece of his political journalism—García Márquez's sterling reputation in the English-speaking world might not survive the translation of his collected journalism into English—is "Vietnam por dentro," or "Vietnam from Inside," which Martin does not mention in his book. A year before it was published, in December 1978, García Márquez had founded an organization called the Habeas Foundation for Human Rights in the Americas, with the aim of "advocating the freeing of prisoners. Rather than taking tyrants to task, it will strive as far as possible to uncover the fate of the disappeared and smooth the way home for exiles. In sum—and unlike other equally vital organizations—Habeas will take a greater immediate interest in helping the oppressed than in condemning the oppressors." In this spirit, it was to be expected that the tragedy of the boat people who fled in desperation from Vietnam would attract his attention, as it attracted that of Sartre and other sympathizers with the Vietnamese regime.

But on his trip to Vietnam the founder of Habeas talked only to one side, and hearkened only to the official story. In García Márquez's dispatch we are given a magistrate of the Ho Chi Minh People's Court, a "top official," the Communist Party's minister of external relations, the mayor of Cholon, the minister of foreign affairs, and, of course, Prime Minister Phan Van Dong, who with "quiet lucidity … received me and my family at an hour when most heads of state are still in bed: at six in the morning." During a stay of "almost a month," García Márquez's group had occasion to attend "cultural festivities" at which "lovely damsels played the sixteen-string lute and sang doleful airs in memory of the battle dead," but they had no time to listen to the refugees, or to interview them, or to offer them assistance. "Their story," García Márquez wrote candidly, "took second place to the grim reality of the country." This "grim reality," of course, was the history of the war against Yankee imperialism and the danger of a new war with China.

What seemed truly momentous to García Márquez in Vietnam was that it "had lost the war of information." For the founder of Habeas, the calamity was not the hundreds of thousands of fugitives drowned, starving, ill, stripped of their possessions, raped, murdered. The calamity was that the world knew about all this. García Márquez regretted that the Vietnamese—the important Vietnamese, the ones he had interviewed—did not possess the "foresight to calculate the vast scale of the international effort on behalf of the refugees." The humanitarians had outplayed the totalitarians—*that* is what bothered him.

All these dispatches adhered to the model of García Márquez's earlier pieces on Hungary, and revealed the pattern of

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all his political journalism, then and now: to listen only to the voices of the powerful, and to counteract—to withhold, downplay, distort, falsify, and omit—any information that could "play into the hand of imperialism."

IV.

Despite those "memorable dispatches" of 1975, Fidel Castro remarked to Régis Debray that he was not yet convinced of the Colombian writer's "revolutionary firmness." True, García Márquez had refused to support the Cuban poet Heberto Padilla in the famous affair of his forced "confessions," that tropical echo of the Moscow Trials that led to the break of many Latin American intellectuals with the regime. Castro noted this, but still he wasn't sure, and so no interview was granted. García Márquez had to content himself at the time with interviewing the strongman of Panama, Omar Torrijos, a second-rank Caribbean dictator but a faithful reader of García Márquez. Torrijos had this to say about *The Autumn of the Patriarch*: "It's true, it's us, what we're like." "His comment left me astonished and delighted," said García Márquez. And "quite quickly," writes Martin, "the two men would come to build a friendship based on a deep emotional attraction which evidently turned over time into a kind of love affair."

In 1976 García Márquez returned to Cuba, and after waiting for a month (like the legendary colonel) at the Hotel Nacional for a call from the Comandante, the meeting that he had been anticipating for almost two decades finally took place. Once accepted by Castro, and under his personal supervision, he wrote "Operación Carlota: Cuba in Angola," a chronicle that won him an award from the International Press Organization. Mario Vargas Llosa (who had written and published a doctoral thesis on *One Hundred Years of Solitude*) bluntly called him Castro's "lackey." Two years later, García Márquez declared that his adherence to the Cuban way was in a sense similar to Catholicism: it was "a Communion with the Saints."

Martin devotes a few passages to describing the growing bond between the Comandante and the writer after 1980. "Ours is an intellectual friendship," García Márquez said in 1982. "When we get together we talk about literature." And it was not just literature that united them. "They began to have an annual vacation together at Castro's residence at Cayo Largo," Martin records, "where sometimes alone, sometimes with guests, they would sail in his fast launch or his cruiser Acuaramas." García Márquez's wife "particularly enjoyed these occasions because Fidel had a special way with women, always attentive and with an old-style gallantry that was both pleasurable and flattering." He also informs us of Castro's culinary skills, and of Gabo's taste for caviar and Castro's for cod. For the Nobel ceremony, Castro sent his friend a boatload of rum, and upon the family's return he put them up at Protocol House number six, which, just a few years later, would become their Cuban home. There García Márquez "overwhelmed" guests such as Debray with bottles of Veuve Clicquot. "There is no contradiction between being rich and being revolutionary," García Márquez declared, "as long as you are sincere about being a revolutionary and not sincere about being a rich man."

In this vein—not of socialist realism but of socialite realism—Martin could have gotten some juice out of *Gabo and Fidel*, by Ángel Esteban and Stéphanie Panichelli (which he mentions in his bibliography but does not quote in the book). This volume presents the testimony of the Cuban poet Miguel Barnet, a friend of García Márquez and president of the Fernando Ortiz Foundation. Barnet gives a detailed account of the parties at the "Siboney mansion," describing even the attire of the host. Fidel and Gabo—says Barnet—"are true specialists in culinary matters, and they know how to appreciate good food and good wines. Gabo is the 'great sybarite,' because of his love for sweets, cod, seafood, and food in general." And Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, a Spanish writer and friend of Castro, collected the following testimony from the "great Smith," who was perhaps Cuba's best chef: "Gabo is a great admirer of my cooking and he's promised me a foreword for my cookbook, which is almost finished." In that cookbook, each of the dishes is dedicated to the person for whom it was created. Gabo's is "Lobster à la Macondo," and Fidel Castro's is "Turtle Consommé." It is important to note that in those days the Cuban ration book (which had been introduced in 1962) contained, per month and per person, the following delicacies: seven pounds of rice and thirty ounces of beans, five pounds of sugar, half a pound of oil, four hundred grams of pasta, ten eggs, one pound of frozen chicken, and half a pound of ground meat (chicken), to which fish, mortadella, or sausage could be added as an alternative in the category of "meat products."

In *The Autumn of the Patriarch*, the Patriarch looks down on the man of letters: "they've got fever in their quills like thoroughbred roosters when they are molting so that they are no good for anything except when they are good for something." García Márquez, now with a house of his own on the island, was good for plenty. In December 1986, he established a film academy in San Antonio de los Baños: the New Latin American Cinema Foundation. The new institution—financed by García Márquez—was important for the regime, because culture in Latin America has always been an essential source of legitimacy. Among its guests would be Robert Redford, Steven Spielberg, and Francis Ford Coppola. The academy, as Martin describes it, was a clever and exciting idea: "Cinema was convivial, collective, proactive, youthful; cinema was sexy and cinema was fun. And García Márquez lived every minute of it; he was surrounded by attractive young women and energetic and ambitious but deferential young men, and he was in his element."

Martin is right: García Márquez was "in his element." What Martin does not see is the biographical significance of what he is recounting. The whole thing was like a reconstruction of the Macondian paradise from before the leaf storm, with the advantage that now it was Gabriel García Márquez who lived on the other side, the privileged side, the "American" side. For ordinary Cubans, his Siboney mansion, the lavish meals, the champagne, the seafood, the marvelous pastas prepared by Castro, the yacht outings were—as García Márquez wrote about the "forbidden city" of the Yankees in Aracataca—"fleeting visions of a remote and unlikely world that was veiled to us mortals."

Best of all was once more being able to walk hand in hand with the patriarch. In 1988 García Márquez wrote a profile of the "caudillo" (as he calls him) that was published as the prologue to *Habla Fidel*, or *Fidel Speaks*, a book by the Italian Gianni Minà. In this profile he furnished a sweeping literary homage to his hero ("He may be unaware of the force of his presence, which seems to take up all the space in the room, though he isn't as tall or as big as he seems at first glance"). That same year, living in Havana, García Márquez made progress on a book about Bolívar's final journey: *The General in His Labyrinth*. Martin suggests that his description of Bolívar was inspired by traits of Castro, and vice versa.

The following year began badly, with the reverberations of a public letter signed in December 1988 by several writers of international renown who demanded that Castro follow in the footsteps of Pinochet and dare to submit his regime to a plebiscite.

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For García Márquez—who in the 1970s had expressed his disdain for the institutions, the laws, and the freedoms of "bourgeois" democracy, and in December 1981 had mocked the "crocodile tears" of the "usual anti-Soviets and anti-communists" after the repression of Solidarity in Poland—the letter was another chapter in the rise of the "right" fostered by John Paul II, Thatcher, Reagan, and Gorbachev himself. (In a visit to Moscow in the late 1980s, García Márquez had warned Gorbachev of the danger of surrendering to the empire.)

Of the signatories to this letter of protest against political unfreedom in Cuba, Martin writes that "the American names are not especially impressive, apart from Susan Sontag, nor were the Latin American ones (no Carlos Fuentes, Augusto Roa Bastos, etc.)." Among the American authors who did not impress Martin were Saul Bellow and Elie Wiesel; among the Latin Americans, Reinaldo Arenas (who composed the document), Ernesto Sábato, Mario Vargas Llosa, Guillermo Cabrera Infante, and Octavio Paz; among the Europeans, Juan Goytisolo, Federico Fellini, Eugene Ionesco, Czesław Miłosz, and Camilo José Cela.

But this is understandable. For the biographer and for his subject, "1989 would be the year of apocalypse." Even more of a blow to Cuba's prestige than the downfall of communism in Eastern Europe was the much-talked-about verdict against Division General Arnaldo Ochoa and the brothers Antonio (Tony) and Patricio de la Guardia, on charges of drug trafficking and treason against the Revolution. This dark and ugly episode—to which Martin devotes only a couple of paragraphs—came to public attention in June 1989. According to the journalist Andrés Oppenheimer, the movement of drugs through Cuba began in 1986 and had the tacit blessing of Fidel, until the American intelligence services detected a compromised operation. Castro then took the opportunity to kill four birds with one stone: he could rid himself of a potentially serious enemy (Ochoa was one of the supreme commanders of the intervention in Angola, a veteran of the incursions into Venezuela, Ethiopia, Yemen, and Nicaragua, and officially recognized as a "Hero of the Revolution") along with the de la Guardia brothers, both of them Castro's friends and attached to the Ministry of the Interior under another "implicated party," the division general José Abrantes. Fidel had entrusted Tony de la Guardia, his "protegé," with multiple intelligence operations (such as the laundering of $60 million for Argentina's Montoneros in 1975, in payment for a kidnapping). It is hard to believe that this new venture—expressly ordered by Abrantes—did not enjoy Fidel's blessing, like everything on the island. But the end justified the means.

The remarkable fact is that Antonio de la Guardia, a character out of an action film, was also a close friend of García Márquez. One of his paintings hung in García Márquez's house in Havana. In that same year, 1989, Gabo dedicated *The General in His Labyrinth* to him: "For Tony, may he sow good." On July 9, when the final verdict was about to be announced, Castro visited García Márquez at his house in Havana. Oppenheimer reconstructed fragments of the long conversation. "If they are executed," García Márquez is reported to have said, "nobody on earth will believe it wasn't you who gave the order." Later that night, the writer received Ileana de la Guardia, Tony's daughter, and her husband Jorge Masseti (the son of the late guerrilla leader Jorge Ricardo Masseti, an old friend and García Márquez's erstwhile boss at *Prensa Latina*). They had come to beg García Márquez to intercede on de la Guardia's behalf, to save his life. The writer said things like "Fidel would be crazy if he allowed the executions," and raised their hopes. He told them not to worry, and advised them not to appeal to any human rights organizations. Four days went by. Then, on July 13, 1989, Gabo's good friend Tony de la Guardia and Ochoa were executed. Patricio was sentenced to thirty years in prison and Abrantes to twenty. The latter died of a heart attack in 1991.

Although he left Cuba before the execution, according to testimony collected by Ileana de la Guardia herself, García Márquez attended "part of the trial, along with Fidel and Raúl, behind the 'great mirror' in the hall of the Cuban Revolutionary Armed Forces." In Paris, during the bicentennial celebration of the French Revolution, he told François Mitterrand that it had all been just "a quarrel among officers." Publicly he claimed to have "very good information" that the charges of "treason" were justified, and he observed that, given the situation, Castro had no alternative.

A few months before the events, writing the final pages of *The General in His Labyrinth*, García Márquez had depicted Simón Bolívar raving in his sleep as he remembers his order to shoot the brave mulatto general Manuel Piar, who had been invincible against the Spaniards and a hero of the masses. "It was the most savage use of power in his life," García Márquez observes in his novel, "but the most opportune as well, for with it he consolidated his authority, unified his command, and cleared the road to glory." And at the chapter's climax García Márquez puts his grandfather's words in Bolívar's mouth: "I'd do it all over again."

"I don't publish any book these days," García Márquez said sometime in the mid-1980s, "before the Comandante reads it." Which is why, regarding the passage about Bolívar and Piar, Martin wonders, "Did he [Castro] remember it as he made his decision?" Of course he remembered it. But given the "very good information" that García Márquez has always claimed to have about Cuba, and given his closeness to Antonio de la Guardia, the interesting questions concern not the dictator but the writer. Was García Márquez unaware of his friend Tony's secret assignments? As he was writing his novel, did he even consider the possibility that his friends would be arrested on charges of purported "treason"?

And so an old cycle of complicity was complete. It began with an execution in the inner circle of the young García Márquez—his grandfather's shooting of his friend and lieutenant Medardo, his lover's son—and it ended with another execution in his inner circle: the Comandante's sentencing of his friend Tony, the sower of good. The writer who, from an early age, adopted his grandfather's "political morality," the one who "quite coldbloodedly puts politics before morality," the one who saw Castro as "his own grandfather figure, against whom he could not, would not dare, would not even wish, to win," had been obliged to test his theory in flesh and blood. And he had accepted the verdict of power.

The friendship and the lobsters have continued for twenty years. Panegyrist, court adviser, press agent, ambassador-at-large, plenipotentiary representative, head of foreign public relations: García Márquez has been all these things for Castro. In 1996, he dined with President Clinton and told him that "if you and Fidel could sit face to face, there wouldn't be any problem left." After September 11, he published a long letter to Bush: "How does it feel now that the horror is erupting in your own yard and not in your neighbor's living room?"

Things were going pretty well for the writer and the Commandante, except at a few moments, as in 2003, when a movement more important and universal than democracy, the movement for

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human rights, seemed to come between them. In March of that year, in a sudden and devastating blow, Castro reprised the Moscow Trials, sentencing seventy-eight dissidents to anywhere from twelve to twenty-seven years in prison. (One of them was accused of possessing a Sony tape recorder.) Immediately thereafter, in the heat of the moment, he ordered the execution of three boys who had tried to flee paradise on a ferry. Confronted with this crime, José Saramago declared (though he later retracted his statement) that "this is as far as I go" with his relationship with Castro. But Susan Sontag went further, and at the Bogotá Book Fair, she confronted García Márquez: "He's this country's greatest writer and I admire him very much, but it's unpardonable that he hasn't spoken out about the latest measures taken by the Cuban regime."

In response, García Márquez seemed to distance himself vaguely from Castro: "Regarding the death penalty, I don't have anything to add to what I've said in private and publicly as long as I can remember: I'm against it in any place, for any reason, in any circumstances." As if the issue were the death penalty! And almost immediately he distanced himself from his distancing: "Some media outlets—among them CNN—are manipulating and distorting my response to Susan Sontag, to make it seem like a statement against the Cuban Revolution." For emphasis, he repeated an old argument, justifying his personal relations with Castro: "I can't count the number of prisoners, dissidents, and conspirators whom I've helped, in absolute silence, to get out of jail or emigrate from Cuba over the last twenty years at least."

In "absolute silence" or in absolute complicity? Why would García Márquez have helped anyone leave Cuba if he did not consider their imprisonment unjust? And if he considered it unjust, to the extent of championing their cause, why did he continue—why does he still continue—to support a regime that commits such injustices? Wouldn't it have been more valuable to denounce the unjust incarceration of those "prisoners, dissidents, and conspirators" and thus help to abolish the political prison system?

Gabriel García Márquez is not a hothouse writer. He claims to be proud of his work as a reporter. He promotes journalism at an academy in Colombia. He has asserted that the news story is a literary genre with the potential to be "not just true to life but better than life. It's as good as a story or a novel, but with one sacred and inviolable difference: novels and stories permit unlimited fabrication but news stories have to be true down to the last comma." How, then, to reconcile this declaration of journalistic ethics with his own concealment of the truth in Cuba, despite his possession of privileged inside information?

Eventually history makes both aesthetic and moral judgments. Aesthetically speaking, it is a little premature to say that García Márquez is the "new Cervantes." But in moral terms, certainly, there is no comparison. A hero in the war against the Turks, wounded and maimed in battle, castaway and prisoner in Algeria for five years, Cervantes lived his ideals, his tribulations, and his poverty with Quixote-like integrity, and enjoyed the supreme freedom of accepting his defeats with humor. There is not a trace of such greatness of spirit in García Márquez, who has avidly collaborated with oppression and dictatorship. Cervantes? Not by a long shot.

The beauties of the fiction of Gabriel García Márquez will survive the twisted loyalties of the man who created it, just as the work of Céline survives his passion for the Nazis and the work of Pound survives his admiration for Mussolini. But it would be an act of poetic justice if, in the autumn of his life and at the zenith of his glory, he disassociated himself from Fidel Castro and put his influence at the service of the Cuban boat people. There is no point in hoping for such a transformation, of course. It is the kind of thing that happens only in García Márquez novels. ◆

Michael Tomasky
IN THE TANK

THE CLINTON TAPES: WRESTLING HISTORY WITH THE PRESIDENT
By Taylor Branch
(Simon & Schuster, 707 pp., $35)

In her infamous first sentence of *The Journalist and the Murderer*, Janet Malcolm swings for the fences and proclaims that "every journalist who is not too stupid or too full of himself to notice what is going on knows that what he does is morally indefensible." She means that journalists use their human subjects and then dispose of them; that we con them in person by "preying on people's vanity, ignorance, or loneliness"—it occurs to me to note that however bleak print's future seems, journalism will at least never run out of material—before gutting them in print. This was a provocative thought in 1990, in those years of innocence before the Internet turned the guttings into a spectator sport.

Malcolm was writing about a certain kind of journalism, and she was writing about murder: specifically, the case of the journalist Joe McGinniss's coverage of the murder trial of Jeffrey MacDonald, accused in 1970 (subsequently convicted, released, and re-imprisoned, where he stews today) of murdering his wife and daughters. Her basic criticism of McGinniss—that he cozied up to, and misled, MacDonald's defense team before producing a book that judged him guilty; and that he did so because he "found out too late . . . that the subject of his book was not up to scratch" as an interesting character—still stands as a useful indictment of journalists in those kinds of situations, especially when the scent of movie money hangs in the air.

But what about politics? Politics is different. In politics no one dies, usually; although, perhaps paradoxically, millions do, but it's not the same thing. And while there can be money in political journalism—sometimes very surprising injections of it, as we will see below—there isn't any really big money. Politicians, as subjects, are inherently interesting. Even when they are quite boring on a personal level (dirty secret: many of them are!), and even when their handlers tamp any remotely interesting human trait out of them for the sake of not offending some focus group, they are still interesting, because of the power they hold and the ways they use it. And in political journalism—this is important to remember—both sides are in on the con, so it all comes out in the wash.

Malcolm's statement, then, is far too broad. All journalism—let's say all urgent and serious journalism, so as to toss out coverage of last night's zoning-board meeting and Britney's latest breakdown and so forth—is not a morally indefensible con game. If one great claim may be made on behalf of *The Clinton Tapes*, it is that

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the book is not only morally defensible, but even (if one is basically sympathetic to Clinton, as I am) is good and useful and in places admirable. Taylor Branch performs a service in these pages. He reaches an audacious conclusion—that Clinton, through all the turmoil and scandal and pseudo-scandal, remained "consistently more candid and idealistic than my colleagues covering him for the press." We have been swimming in an ocean of journalism for the last fifteen years making precisely the opposite claims about Clinton, some of which of course have a basis in some of his actions, and so Branch's view is useful to have, and is more or less persuasive.

Even so, an odd quality floats through these pages—a withholding of journalistic assessment, a reluctance about getting to the bottom of things, an excessive identification with the subject, an offhandedness even—that often left me spellbound by the details but still in some way skeptical about Branch's project, and grabbing for its big narrative hook. All this gives the reader the odd feeling of leaving the dinner table stuffed but still undernourished. I finished *The Clinton Tapes*, very much to my surprise, with fewer questions for Clinton than for Branch.

In a somewhat obligatory fashion, the book opens with the first of their seventy-nine sessions, which took place on October 14, 1993. (Their meetings ran right up through January 2001, and straggled on as late as 2004.) But it is in the second chapter that Branch, the great historian of the civil rights movement whose work few contemporary journalists have equaled, describes how the project got started. A few days after the election in 1992, Branch read in his hometown paper, *The Baltimore Sun*, a quotation from Clinton, who had heard that Branch was in Little Rock on the night of the big victory celebration and expressed regret at having missed him. Branch and Clinton—both Clintons, actually—had worked and even lived together on the McGovern campaign in Texas. But they had split soon thereafter to pursue truth and justice in their different ways, and had fallen out of touch.

Shortly after Thanksgiving, Branch's phone rang: a transition official wanted to know if he and his wife could come down to Washington to see the president-elect. Clinton got the Branches plum seats at the inauguration and an invitation to a dinner hosted by Katharine Graham. Branch was asked to draft language for the first State of the Union speech. Clinton said he wanted an in-house historian, his own Schlesinger. What did Branch think? "Reeling," he writes, "I played for time by complimenting the president for his quest to devise a practical solution." Inside, he was thinking what you or I would have been thinking. Wowza.

Busy with his civil rights trilogy, Branch resisted going on staff with a salary as Clinton first suggested, and eventually the two came up with the idea of recorded interviews on an ad hoc basis. What with being president and all, Clinton didn't get around to having Branch invited back to start the formal interviews for nearly a year and a half. But once they started, they happened with some frequency, and usually—this will not surprise students of Clinton—on the spur of the moment and late at night. Branch reports that he often received calls around six in the evening, beckoning him to appear at the White House around ten that night. Clinton would be in the Solarium, or perhaps the private-residence kitchen, surrounded by briefing papers and crossword puzzles and decks of cards. Sometimes Hillary was present, and sometimes Chelsea, and sometimes Hugh Rodham, and sometimes staffers, or sometimes not. Branch would fire up his tape recorders (two of them), and Clinton would let it rip. North Korea, health care, Saddam, Northern Ireland, elections, this or that unyielding senator, Ken Starr, the press (oh, there's *lots* of press!)—whatever was in the news and on his mind.

It sounds as if it can't help but be fascinating, and on many occasions it is. But in truth it isn't as fascinating as it should be, and the reason rests in the ground rules established by author and subject. Clinton planned to use these tapes for himself—in compiling his post-service memoirs, and for his library. They discussed each keeping a set, but Branch writes that it was he, not Clinton, who suggested that the president keep both copies in his possession. And so every night, when they finished, Branch handed his tapes over to Clinton, who stashed them away. Think about that: they are the very tapes referred to excitedly in the book's title, and Branch had no access to them. He was left to speak into a recording device as he drove home, recreating choice quotes and the general flow of things. These are not the Clinton tapes, they are the Branch tapes.

If journalism is the first draft of history, and history is, uh, the real draft of history, what are we to call this hybrid? When I review a book, I dog-ear the pages that I know will be of interest to me later when I sit down to write, and I scribble a little note on the page to remind myself exactly why I dog-eared that page. I have never scribbled so often exclamations such as, "And??"; "And BC said?"; "In BC's words?" Consider this passage:

> Almost on cue, a Bosnia phone call came through from Secretary of State Christopher. I left the tapes running to record the president's side. No, he kept saying, he did not agree to restore the U.N. sign-off for air strikes. Who said he did? Why would he want to get Boutros-Ghali back in there? Clinton repeatedly assured Christopher that he had not wavered on scrapping the two-key agreement. He said this sabotage must be Chirac.... He spun out reasons why they were wrong on fact, substance, and now the politics, because a stronger U.N. role in Bosnia would abet a congressional challenge to his policy. The president hung up, holding his cards, which snapped me out of a reverie that this was extreme multitasking even for him. "That's what it's like," he said, of Bosnia. "Terrible and never-ending."

Or this one:

> Out of these thoughts, the president expressed more than once a general lesson that leaders need to be at peace—not totally at peace, but roughly united in mind and spirit. He said torment skews judgment.... A job like this requires a settled base inside, he kept saying, because decisions every day can offend and hurt people in very large numbers. He continued sporadically on this theme even after we packed up.

These seem like reasonably vivid passages. But in both of them, I would really prefer to know exactly what the president said. Ditto here: "The president summarized Hillary's campaign crisis on tape, and paused to take another political call." What? Bill Clinton, on tape, analyzing a trouble spot (there were several, and they were severe) in his wife's first Senate campaign? We have never heard this before. And I can't read this, because...?

This pattern of revelations that do not quite reveal—of taking away with one hand what has been given with the other—is repeated throughout *The Clinton Tapes*. Long paragraphs describe what Clinton said, and then one short quotation follows. Sound recording was not invented for so paltry a payoff. We know that Bill Clinton speaks colorfully and precisely. The promise of his contemporaneous and candid riffs

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seemed like the whole basis for, and appeal of, this book. But owing to the bizarre ground rules, it's mostly not there.

I suppose one understands Clinton's instinct: he wanted to preserve these memories for his own use. But I don't understand why Branch agreed to these terms, and he never explains why. I can imagine Clinton thinking that he may have said something untoward, calling Bashar Al-Assad a shithead or something (as it seems he might have, and not without reason), and wanted it kept from the record. But at the very least Branch could have negotiated an arrangement whereby he could have read through the transcriptions and, with Clinton's consent, used much larger chunks of Clinton's voice than he used. Branch is the reverse-McGinniss: he seems to have gotten so interested in his subject that he surrendered to him to a greater degree than any serious journalist or annalist or historian should have.

There are, certainly, some illuminations in *The Clinton Tapes*, and a mother lode of gratifyingly un-profound ones. (Clinton wanted Gore to choose Barbara Mikulski as his running mate!) One of my favorite stories from the book, one that really pulls back the curtain on the rarefied but bizarre world in which heads of state live, involves Clinton's meeting with then–Chinese premier Jiang Zemin in Seattle in 1993. The two of them sat across from each other at a small table with only their interpreters. Rather than engaging in colloquy with the world's most powerful person, Jiang read studiously from a text "about the glorious history of China and the folly of attempts to influence her internal affairs." On and on he droned. At length, an exasperated Clinton interrupted. Look, he said. I don't want to meddle in your internal affairs. I don't even mind your prisons. I plan on putting more people in ours myself. All you need to do, Clinton confided,

Shaving Your Father's Face

First I get a father
from some city
of fathers

one with a neck

bright
red

And with all the tiny bird bones in my fingers carefully
    tip his chin back into the light like love
        so I can see
        so I can smell

I tell a dirty joke, then drag the steel across the universe

There's nothing better
than shaving your father's face
except maybe
shaving

your mother's legs

My bedside manner is impeccable

The white foam
stays white

*

In the evening
his face attracts moths and women
sons
daughters

It's as if his chin is made of Christmas lights, you have to
    shave the moths and family off
        it takes forever

The wings get all over your fingers

I like to use Merkur Super
platinum coated
stainless
steel

You could write on water with it

Rust free
Rost Frei

Made in Germany
so it will

last and last

*

Shaving my father's face
I'm not shaving
my face

I'm shaving my brain

Lifting
the gray folds
to get at
the pink parts

Stuffing toilet paper into all the tiny holes I cut so
    it looks like a field of red flags waving
        paper tulips
        love notes

The universe wants a close shave
It wants its hair
high
and tight

You could bounce a dime off dad's skin

My hand
on your face can you
feel it

MICHAEL DICKMAN

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is to make a few gestures about human rights, and here are a couple of suggestions. Clinton thought that he had broken the ice. But when he finished, "Jiang simply resumed his speech."

The book is substance-heavy (this is good) and covers every imaginable subject. Since Branch knew Jean-Bertrand Aristide previously, there is maybe a little too much Haiti. There is an intense showdown in 1999 between Clinton and Nawaz Sharif over a Kashmir crisis, initiated by Pakistan, that had flared up at the time. Clinton considered an India-Pakistan standoff the most likely flashpoint for nuclear war in the world, and thus the conflict was one of the most important issues on his plate. He tells Branch that at one point during tense Blair House negotiations, he made all aides leave the room: just him and Sharif, eyeball to eyeball, in what he regarded as "his most ferocious encounter in politics—bar none."

Around the Sharif talks, Clinton did attend two Women's World Cup soccer matches—this was the year of Mia Hamm's celebrated kick—and then, in quick succession, the funerals of John F. Kennedy Jr. and King Hassan of Morocco. All this while all hell was breaking loose in New York over Hillary's interview in the debut issue of *Talk* magazine, over which the media accused her of excusing Bill's infidelities because of his childhood traumas. *The Clinton Tapes* does convey the feeling of what a president's life is like, standing on a moving walkway as it goes faster, faster, and faster, and ducking as the slings and arrows start coming at you.

We know a lot about those slings and arrows, but if Bill Clinton's innermost thoughts on the Lewinsky scandal are what you want out of *The Clinton Tapes*, you will be disappointed. There is a reason for this. Originally, Clinton and Branch both strove to keep these conversations secret. But inevitably word of them got around, the implication of which was that they might be subpoenaed. The tapes weren't, but because his name appeared regularly in White House visitor logs, Branch himself was subpoenaed by Al D'Amato's Senate Banking Committee. FBI agents visited Branch's home in 1996 and grilled him about whether he had ever seen some legal billing records or anything that might have resembled them. For these kinds of reasons, Branch writes, Clinton did not dwell much on tape about the substance of any of these salacious matters.

But he did talk a lot about the coverage of them. *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* "have corrupted themselves over Whitewater," he says at one point. "Don't get me started." And later, as impeachment proceeded, while Clinton did not deny that he messed up in rather a large way with Lewinsky, he mused that while Leon Jaworski's raw evidence against Richard Nixon had never been leaked, Starr was planting seedlings all over town: "I trusted the press. I trusted Congress. I trusted the courts. I was wrong on all counts." The day of his Senate acquittal found him in the Treaty Room, re-arranging books and recommending to Branch *Where Peachtree Meets Sweet Auburn*, a history of race relations in Atlanta. Toward the end came the big blow-up with Al Gore, much reported since the book's release, in which Clinton tells Gore that he could have swung up to four states if Gore had let him campaign in them, while Gore angrily blames Clinton for his defeat and holds Clinton responsible for the Buddhist fund-raising controversy, which Branch says Gore thought of as "the worst experience of his life." The conclusion finds Branch trudging up to Chappaqua, dining with Clinton at a French bistro where Branch is surprised to find the waitress paying more attention to him than to Clinton. Don't worry, Clinton said; she had already propositioned him, and, for good measure, Hillary and Chelsea, too. Ha ha. (It turned out that the woman had some mental issues.)

Branch began this project skeptically, feeling that since their days together in Texas he had taken the path of integrity, while Clinton had sold himself to a world of corruption and compromise. By the book's end, he has reversed this view. His identification with Clinton's opinions, especially about the media and Whitewater and Lewinsky, is thorough.

Branch makes no pretense of being objective and detached. Indeed, in the last chapter, he discloses that, after Clinton was out of office and had made some money, the former president gave him a check for $50,000 for his services over the years. Despite some hesitation, on the grounds that he regarded the project "as a public service," Branch accepted the check, because he "did need the money."

It is depressing to think that one of America's greatest journalist-historians needed the money. Inasmuch as the tapes helped Clinton write *My Life*, Branch certainly rendered the president a service that had a fair market value. But the nature of the transaction—undiscussed, delivered as a kind of largesse from above rather than as an agreed-upon payment—is just one more odd detail in the story of a relationship between a fine writer and an important subject in which the subject had more control over the project than the writer did. A journalist, even one as formidable as Taylor Branch, cannot wrestle history with a president (as the subtitle has it) and win, especially when the journalist gives the president the source material. *The Clinton Tapes* is less illuminating than it could have been, and more disturbing than it should have been. ◆

Steven Hahn
THE RACE MAN

UP FROM HISTORY: THE LIFE OF BOOKER T. WASHINGTON
By Robert J. Norrell
(Harvard University Press, 508 pp., $35)

I.

Once the most famous and influential African American in the United States (and probably the world), Booker T. Washington has earned at best mixed reviews in the decades since his death in 1915. Black intellectuals and political activists, from W. E. B. Du Bois to the present day, have generally seen Washington as a conservative racial accommodationist, yielding to the repressive power of Jim Crow and urging American blacks to abandon their political struggles for equality and instead to set their sights on a future of manual labor and petty property ownership.

Nothing brought Washington more notoriety than the speech that he delivered in 1895 at the Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta when, before a racially mixed audience, he appeared to acquiesce to the imperatives of legal segregation ("in all things purely social we can be as separate as the fingers") while encouraging African Amer-

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icans to "cast down your buckets" in the Jim Crow South. Although he is still read in college (and some high school) classes, usually against Du Bois, and remains in the pantheon of black historical figures, Washington is widely ridiculed and derided in black communities for his seemingly shameless pursuit of white favor. For many, he is the classic "Uncle Tom." Even his most distinguished biographer, Louis R. Harlan, could not do much better than find at Washington's core a drive for personal power and a penchant for political manipulation. And now that we are in the Age of Obama, when a man of African descent who set his sights on higher education and threw himself into grassroots politics—in short, who did many of the things that Washington advised against—has been elected president of the United States, do we really need to reacquaint ourselves with the likes of Booker T. Washington? Do his life and views any longer have meaning for us? Do we need another biography?

Robert J. Norrell clearly thinks we do. The author of several histories of race and the American South, including a fine study of the civil rights movement in Tuskegee, Alabama, where Washington flourished, Norrell believes that both the professional and popular wisdoms on Washington are seriously mistaken. In his view, they overestimate the efficacy of protest as a vehicle for change and they underestimate the challenges that Washington faced. Americans, Norrell writes, have lost touch not only with the idea of educational, moral, and economic development as a means for integrating disadvantaged groups in the modern world, but also with the memory of how fiercely Southern whites contested the developmental projects that Washington devised. In Booker T. Washington, Norrell sees a sophisticated mind, a complex approach to social problems, and admirable goals for the people he sought to lead, all in a world that set profound limits on what he could expect to achieve. Rather than take the potentially suicidal path of resistance or simply concede the fight, Washington offered hope and optimism, together with an effort to rise above history itself. But who, we might ask, benefitted from his offer, and how?

Booker T. Washington lived an extraordinary life, as he was among the first to recognize. Indeed, much of what we know about his early years comes to us by way of two autobiographies that he published just after the turn of the twentieth century, *The Story of My Life and Work*, and the far better-known *Up from Slavery*. Both celebrated Washington's rise to the leadership of his race and provided powerful lessons as to how the perilous world of the late nineteenth century might be successfully navigated. Although Norrell does not uncover anything really new in the details, it is hard not to marvel at the ascent.

Washington's origins were as humble as any American origins could be. He was born a slave in 1856 on a small plantation in western Virginia. His father was a white man whose identity (he claimed) was never revealed to him, and his mother, Jane, was a slave who struggled mightily to protect and nurture her three children, and to instill the values of hard work and thrift. "If I have done anything in life worth attention," Washington subsequently reflected, "I feel sure that I inherited the disposition from my mother." Very young when the Civil War erupted, Washington later remembered how the slaves learned of the unfolding political events and how his mother prayed fervently "that Lincoln and his armies might be successful and that one day she and her children might be free."

By 1865, those prayers were answered, and Jane quickly gathered up the children and headed to the industrial village of Malden, West Virginia, two hundred miles away, where her husband, Wash Ferguson, had found a job in the local saltworks. Although Booker (he had no surname at this point) initially went to work with Ferguson at the saltworks and then, for a time, in nearby coal mines (family economies were the basis of survival for most laboring people in the United States), his great desire was for an education. Stepfather Ferguson saw no purpose in the idea and was especially mindful of the lost income. But Jane helped her son gain the rudiments of literacy and then persuaded her husband to allow Booker to go to school if he would do an early shift at the saltworks. Enrolling in school set him on a better path and, not incidentally, required that he have a surname: he chose "Washington," which Norrell suggests associated him forever with the American nation and its founder, but was also the first name of his stepfather. He later added Taliaferro as a middle name, which his mother had apparently given him shortly after his birth.

Far more important than school in advancing Washington's prospects was a job that he secured (owing to Jane's inquiries) as a houseboy for Viola Ruffner, the New England–born wife of Lewis Ruffner, who owned the saltworks, had been a general in the Union Army, and was the town's leading Republican. A former English teacher herself, Mrs. Ruffner developed a close and trusting relationship with Washington. Like his mother Jane, she emphasized values of self-reliance, thrift, sobriety, and accountability, and she promoted his education not only by giving him time off to attend school but also by helping him to refine his verbal skills. For his part, Washington learned the importance of doing jobs properly and promptly, and began to develop new ambitions and a sense of self-confidence. He also learned about the very tense political world of the post-emancipation South, as Lewis Ruffner's Republicans became targets of vigilante terrorism. What turned out to be four years at the Ruffners thereby taught Washington valuable lessons about getting along with white people and the dangers of participating in politics.

Ironically enough, it was from two black coal miners, not from the Ruffners or his school teachers, that Washington learned of the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute, located near Norfolk, Virginia, a teacher- and vocational-training school for black students that enabled the poorer among them to work for their tuition and board. Feeling readied by his time with the Ruffners and eager to better himself, Washington cobbled together a little money from family and friends and headed off on what was a five-hundred-mile journey. He arrived at Hampton with a scant fifty cents in his pocket. He was sixteen years old.

Hampton Institute represented an important front in the cultural reconstruction of the former Confederate South—designed not so much to reunite the nation politically or to rebuild the South economically but to transform, or "civilize," the South, and especially its former slave population. For years, anti-slavery Northerners had portrayed the slave South as economically backward and culturally retrograde, a blight on the nation's progress. And even if they did not believe that African Americans were innately inferior to whites (as most did), they nonetheless thought that the experience of enslavement had left them mired in ignorance, superstition, and profligacy. The project, therefore, was not only to ensure the demise of slavery but also to uplift the former slaves, to instruct them in proper conduct, self-discipline, the useful arts, family responsibility, and Christian values.

Founded in 1868 on the site of a wartime contraband (or fugitive slave) camp,

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Hampton was headed up by Samuel Chapman Armstrong, a Union Army general who had commanded black troops and then served in the Freedmen's Bureau. Born to Christian missionaries in Hawaii, he seemed to have imbibed their paternalist disposition to lend helping hands to those they regarded as intellectually and morally inferior. For Armstrong, Hampton's task was to advance black folk along an evolutionary path by enabling them to develop labor skills and economic independence. He had little interest in the classical curriculum and instead was satisfied with courses in English, mathematics, biology, and history. Most of all, he hoped to promote good character and work habits. As Norrell notes, it was little better than a modern middle-school education.

Washington thrived. He may have seen in Armstrong the white father figure he hoped would claim him, and he certainly appears to have been influenced by Armstrong's Anglo-Saxon triumphalism, not to mention his anti-Catholicism. Most consequentially, Washington caught Armstrong's attention and was chosen as one of Hampton's graduation speakers in 1875. Then, after brief stints teaching school back in Malden, reading law, and attending theological seminary, he was called back to Hampton in 1879 to give the commencement address. Armstrong was so impressed with Washington's speech ("The Force that Wins") that he hired him at Hampton and began to groom him for educational leadership. In early 1881, having been asked to recommend a white man to run a newly established black normal school in rural Tuskegee, Alabama, Armstrong instead recommended Washington, "the best man we ever had here."

When Washington arrived in the Alabama black belt in June of 1881, he had to start from scratch. What would become the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute had neither a building in which to hold classes nor students to attend them. But he quickly arranged to use the local Zion Negro Church, a log structure, and then traversed the countryside in search of student recruits. Washington organized the curriculum around his (and Armstrong's) view of the educational basics: grammar and composition, history, geography, arithmetic, and—by no means least—hygiene. Those students who could not afford the school fees were put to work building and farming. Before the 1880s were out, Tuskegee had about five hundred students (male and female), twenty-five teachers (all from Hampton), and, owing to money that he raised annually (mostly in the Northeast) and the hard work of the school community, a campus of nearly seven hundred acres with classrooms, dormitories, a foundry, a blacksmith shop, and fields sown in market and subsistence crops.

Unobtrusive as he tried to be in conducting the business of Tuskegee, Washington recognized the need to cultivate the good graces of the local white elite. Tuskegee was in the heart of a black-majority district, but Reconstruction had already been overthrown and white Democrats had re-asserted their political power, often through paramilitary means. Washington invited the local white merchant Thomas Dryer to join the school's board of trustees, and did what he could to promote an image of Tuskegee as a "model community" nurturing peace and mutual good will between the races.

Even so—and this is Norrell's main brief for reconsidering Washington—there was little peace or good will to be found among those he calls "white nationalists." By Norrell's lights, they were omnipresent, not only in the vicinity of Tuskegee but most everywhere else in the Deep South. The white nationalists had moved to enforce black submission in the aftermath of emancipation; they had organized to harass, drive out, or murder black political activists; and they looked with profound suspicion on any project to educate and advance black people. Washington would have to tread both carefully and creatively, avoiding conflict and confrontation while spinning fictions of racial harmony and respect. He would become, Norrell writes, "a master of indirection, of the hidden hand of action; but he did so because he had to."

It wasn't easy, and Washington had to surmount a variety of personal challenges in the early years. He exhausted himself attempting to manage the school and simultaneously raise funds for its operations, and despite his best efforts Tuskegee occasionally tottered on the edge of financial ruin. Two of his three marriages—we do not know very much about any of them—ended with the untimely deaths of his wives. An accidental fire destroyed his house on Tuskegee's grounds. And Washington's successes at building Tuskegee invited the envy and hostility of William Councill and William Burns Patterson, who ran the two black public colleges in the state.

The next decade—the 1890s—saw Tuskegee become more firmly established and secure financially, and Washington emerge as a figure of national consequence. Thanks to the donations of wealthy white Northerners and their foundations, Washington managed to raise significant amounts of money, boost enrollments, and purchase land. He also became increasingly interested in industrial education as a means of developing a black petit bourgeoisie and a class of skilled tradesmen, believing that white labor hostility and massive European immigration threatened to displace black workers and small businesses. And he tried to reach out to neighboring black farmers by initiating a Tuskegee Negro Conference to address their problems.

The irony, and Norrell acknowledges it, is that the 1890s also saw the most ferocious attack on African Americans since the late seventeenth century, when slavery was codified into law. White supremacists targeted black civil and political rights, social services, institutions, and the public spaces they could use, enacting disfranchisement and legalized segregation, not to mention carrying out hundreds of lynchings in the small-town and rural districts. The "Negro Problem," a white discourse about black status and prospects in America (and a response to black gains and assertiveness), suddenly received attention across the country, and seemed to suggest a very pessimistic white consensus about the future.

Washington was well aware of this discourse, and very much feared the repercussions for Tuskegee, and for African Americans more generally. When he was invited to speak at the Atlanta exposition in 1895, he saw an opportunity to shift the terms of discussion and counter white pessimism about the possibilities for peace and progress between the races. Although later critics termed the address the "Atlanta Compromise," since it implored Southern blacks to accept the world of Jim Crow while turning a friendly face to whites, Norrell asks us to regard it somewhat differently. True, Washington said it had been a mistake for the federal government to enfranchise African American men. True, he described Reconstruction and the black political mobilizations it enabled as a misguided experiment. True, he claimed that blacks had learned that they would mostly live by manual labor. And true, he called agitation for social equality "the extremest folly." But Norrell insists that Washington was attempting to address white anxieties, and imagining a future in which African

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Americans could be seen as advancing rather than declining, could be accepted by white people, and could find a secure place for themselves in a once hostile America. In sum: he wanted to find "a solution to the Negro Problem."

The verdict was remarkable. The white South may have remained fairly quiet (aside from some prominent boosters) and there may have been sprinklings of black dissent; but praise and enthusiasm for the speech flooded in, even from later critics such as Du Bois. It made Washington an instant celebrity and effectively elevated him to leadership of the race. This was a propitious moment: earlier in the year Frederick Douglass, the fugitive slave, abolitionist, and great champion of civil and political equality, had died, and with him, perhaps, the disposition toward political organization and protest. Washington's ascendancy seemed to herald a less confrontational orientation.

Consecrated as race leader, Washington set out to use the power and the influence at his disposal. With a keen appreciation for public relations and mass communications, he tried to counter the media's negative representation of African Americans and instead spoke almost relentlessly—though in a folksy and unassuming manner—of the progress that they were making. Recognizing that African Americans offered the Republican Party the few votes it managed to win in the South, he looked to wrest their fair share of patronage rewards. Fully cognizant of Tuskegee's growing reputation nationally, he built a large network of supporters (detractors would call it the "Tuskegee Machine") who embraced his mission and leadership. He soon wrote autobiographies that told of his rise from humble roots and were meant to exemplify the arc of racial advance. And when an assassin's bullet ended the life of President William McKinley, the new president, Theodore Roosevelt, who seemed to share Washington's views about black education and moral improvement, immediately began to consult him about political appointments in the South. Scandalizing much of the white South, Roosevelt even had him to dinner at the White House.

Still, as Norrell insists, Washington was not simply trying to curry white favor, bow to Jim Crow, or feather his own nest. He decried the humiliations of segregation, was disheartened by the Supreme Court's decision in *Plessy* v. *Ferguson* in 1896, which countenanced segregation, and moved, mostly behind the scenes, to defeat or deflect state initiatives depriving African Americans of the political rights they had attained during Reconstruction. He even saw merit in urban boycotts of segregated streetcars and, on occasion, spoke out publicly against lynching. Norrell argues that Washington anticipated much of the NAACP's later civil rights agenda, and buttresses this claim by describing the vicious white nationalist attacks on him that warned white Southerners of Washington's goal of black economic and social equality and of his deceitful ways.

Not all African Americans of the time understood Washington as Norrell understands him, and by the turn of the twentieth century a cohort had begun to array against him. They were mostly to be found in the North and the District of Columbia, and they bridled at Washington's willingness to conciliate the white South, and lower the horizons of black aspiration, and tolerate the ferocious repression of black people—at least without speaking up publicly. They also worried about the power that he was accumulating and the influence that he wielded in the Republican party. Du Bois would become the most prominent of these opponents, and despite his previous support for Washington and the post at Tuskegee that Washington offered him, he famously challenged Washington's claim to leadership in *The Souls of Black Folk* in 1903. Two years later that opposition would find expression in the Niagara Movement, organized by Du Bois, William Monroe Trotter, and twenty-eight other black intellectuals, professionals, and businessmen, for the aggressive pursuit of civil rights. It was a forerunner of the NAACP.

Norrell insists that Du Bois purposefully misrepresented Washington's views and in so doing embraced a racial essentialism that would inform later black nationalisms. There is some truth to this. Du Bois was a complex thinker whose ideas changed over time and could never be put into neat categories. His subsequent efforts to defeat Marcus Garvey in the early 1920s demonstrate the lengths to which he might go to take down rivals. Yet while Washington fought back "aggressively" and "with fierce cunning," the damage to him seemed to mount steadily thereafter. Washington initially responded to news of the brutal Atlanta race riot of 1906 with a silence that further angered his critics. His influence with President Roosevelt began to decline, as the Republican Party determined to pursue a "lily-white" strategy in the South, and matters deteriorated in the subsequent administration of William Howard Taft. The NAACP was established in 1909 around a program of fighting racial discrimination and calls for Washington's replacement as a race leader. Worse still, in 1911 he had an altercation outside a white woman's apartment in Manhattan, and although he denied any impropriety, the rampant speculation about a sexual encounter was, in Norrell's words, "plausible." (Du Bois claimed it involved a prostitute.)

For the next several years, Washington took greater aim at racial discrimination in American public life, helping to challenge a repressive contract labor law in Alabama, arguing against residential segregation, laying the groundwork for the National Urban League, and attempting to stop the showing of D. W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*. Norrell senses in Washington's language around this time a greater "assertiveness" and a "more emphatic rejection of injustice." Perhaps Washington was taking fuller account of his critics; perhaps he was attempting to salvage his leadership. In any event, his time was running out. In late 1914, Washington's health, which had troubled him for years, began to fail. There were symptoms of diabetes and bouts of acute gastrointestinal distress, severe headaches and high blood pressure. When he finally succumbed in November 1915, complications from syphilis may have been in play as well: a rather inglorious end for a man whom Norrell regards as a prophetic figure.

II.

If Booker T. Washington is to be understood as a prophetic figure, readers might expect that Robert Norrell would conclude *Up from History* with a serious consideration of Washington's legacies. They will be disappointed. After a few gestures in this direction, Norrell ends instead with a screed against those writers who, in his judgment, have misunderstood or failed

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to appreciate Washington. They include many scholars (John Hope Franklin, Rayford Logan, August Meier, David Levering Lewis) and black freedom activists (Martin Luther King, John L. Lewis), but Norrell reserves special venom for C. Vann Woodward and Louis R. Harlan. Woodward, it seems, embraced Du Bois's views (including the "Atlanta Compromise") and criticized Washington for accommodating injustice and cozying up to powerful whites; Harlan then "recycled his mentor's pejoratives" and apparently, like many of Woodward's other students, "jealously protected his positions."

Now, we all get angry and irritated at our critics, and at other scholars and rivals whom we believe got the thing wrong. But mostly we manage to let it pass or, through the good offices of friends and editors, agree to take a deep breath, have a stiff drink, or see our therapist before doing something foolish. Norrell seems to have been left to his own devices, and he serves up utterly unmerited disrespect for his predecessors. In truth, Norrell's interpretive differences with Woodward and Harlan are really matters of emphasis, and, rather than "recycling" Woodward, Harlan's acclaimed two-volume biography is in every way his own work and one that will remain among the great books on Washington for a long time to come. But the real price for this misplaced indignation is Norrell's inability to recognize a number of prophetic legacies that should indeed be attributed to Washington.

First, though, a reckoning. Washington deserves great credit for struggling his way out of Malden, West Virginia, excelling at Hampton, and building Tuskegee Institute from the ground up in an intensely hostile environment. As a "race leader," however, his achievements are not so easy to detect. Washington may have wished to change the racial discourse in the United States, enable black progress, and encourage Americans to see the racial future in optimistic terms; and he may have imagined that by accepting the main lines of Jim Crow, cultivating wealthy white conservatives, and instructing black folk to avoid politics and get down to work, he would contribute to those ends. But in fact there was little to show for it. If anything, conditions deteriorated dramatically for African Americans during Washington's ascendancy, and racial antagonisms became even more bitter and explosive. Instead of "casting down their buckets," hundreds of thousands of black Southerners thus voted with their feet and began to head North in the first phases of what is now known as the Great Migration.

If Washington chose to work behind the scenes rather than in public to defeat or to curb the mounting forces of white supremacy, he had little if anything to show for that, either. In the 1890s and the first decades of the twentieth century, lynching reached epidemic proportions. Southern states disenfranchised African American voters, segregated public facilities, and dramatically cut funding for black social services (including schools)—and the federal government ratified those policies. This was truly, as Rayford Logan put it, the "nadir" of black life in the recent United States. Norrell seems to acknowledge as much in describing Washington as "a heroic failure," but he places the stress on "heroic." I would place the stress, in these matters, on "failure."

Yet there are ways in which Washington did cast a long and significant shadow, in which he was prophetic and visionary, and in which his legacies remain with us. Had Norrell been less focused on besting his scholarly predecessors on what turn out to be relatively narrow grounds, he may well have glimpsed them. How so? The "Negro Problem," which established long discursive legs in the late nineteenth century, had been central to the white American encounter with African Americans since at least the late eighteenth century. The "problem" was not how to square slavery with the principles of the Declaration of Independence, or to sustain a democracy with a large social group whose very presence had been coerced, or to assimilate formerly enslaved people into the body politic. The "problem," especially after emancipation, was one of "management." Black people were a "problem" because they were in the United States, and white people had to figure out how to move on with their own business without becoming mired in conflicts with blacks or utilizing too many valuable resources to control them. (Most every society, it should be said, has some version of the "Negro Problem.")

In his *Notes on the State of Virginia* in 1787, and in other writings on slavery and African Americans, Thomas Jefferson established an important intellectual foundation. Troubled by the morality and the political wisdom of slaveholding, Jefferson still could not imagine how white and black Americans might live together in peace under conditions of freedom. This was his "Negro Problem," and while he dodged it by refusing publicly to endorse emancipation, he also suggested that colonization (forced exile of the black population) might be the most suitable solution. Colonization subsequently became a centerpiece of emancipationist thought in the United States—Abraham Lincoln held on to it even as late as his Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation of 1862—and it remained one of several white perspectives on the "Negro Problem" that emerged after the Civil War.

By the late 1880s and 1890s, when Booker T. Washington took direct account of it, the "Negro Problem" loomed especially large and worrisome, because the first generation of whites and blacks born after slavery were now meeting each other as adults (chiefly) in the Southern states, and also because violence and repression seemed to be the first resorts for many whites, particularly in rural and small-town areas. Washington's efforts to develop a new script for the "Negro Problem" must be seen in relation to the work of white Southerners and Northerners who mostly lived in cities, considered themselves modern and enlightened (they were often part of the Progressive movement), and crafted the logic—if not the specific policies—of segregation and disfranchisement.

Like Washington, they saw democratic politics provoking strife, and the social confusions of the public world inviting confrontations. The racial etiquettes of slavery were gone, but they had not been replaced by new ones, save for the enforced submission of African Americans. Lynchings and other forms of violent repression, they believed, cast the South as a barbaric society and discouraged economic investment. Segregation and disfranchisement seemed to promise progress and civility in Southern life, by placing political power in the hands of those prepared to exercise it and orchestrating, with legally prescribed rules, how whites and blacks were to negotiate the public sphere. They did not share Washington's interest in black education and economic advancement, of course; but they all embraced the image of peace, prosperity, goodwill, and progress that depended on the rational management of race.

As Michael R. West shows in his brilliant book *The Education of Booker T. Washington* (which Norrell does not cite), Washington, together with these white modernizers, thus invented the idea of "race relations" as an approach to, and a cure for, the "Negro Problem." "Race relations" was a framework of analysis and a discursive practice—a way of choreographing and assessing the interactions and relative advances of black and white people—that emerged in the age of

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Washington and became so deeply embedded in popular thought and academic culture that it came to appear as a "thing," or set of relations in their own right—as the very basis of American and African American historical study rather than as a political construction of modernity. Indeed, as West suggests, the idea of "race relations" so powerfully influenced the ensuing decades that the developing civil rights movement cannot be understood apart from it.

Here the prophetic and visionary Washington comes forth, though perhaps not as Norrell intended, and places his stamp on—and constrains—future black freedom struggles. The "Negro Problem" remained a central category of American social discourse, as James Baldwin and Ralph Ellison took pains to observe, and "race relations," rather than, say, democracy, equality, or power, became (and still is) the principal measure of evaluation.

Booker T. Washington's legacies can be seen in other areas as well. Norrell argues, I think correctly, that despite the hostility of mostly Northern black critics, Washington enjoyed great support and popularity in the South, together with significant recognition in many other parts of the black world, especially southern Africa and the Caribbean. After all, hundreds of black teachers received their training at Tuskegee and then went out, often into the rural areas whence many of them originally came, to open new schools or to take up posts at schools that were already established. We do not learn anything from Norrell about these teachers, their schools, or the communities they served (even though many of the teachers corresponded with Washington). This is unfortunate, because it would help us to understand how Washington's ideas and approaches translated on the ground, and where they had most resonance. What are we to make, for example, of a black tenant farmer, living in a "family rent group" in Mississippi, who went to hear Washington speak and, while finding much with which to agree, adamantly rejected the "philosophy of casting down one's bucket wherever one was?" "This," he charged, "smacked of the white man's idea that black people should be satisfied with what they had rather than make any attempt to better themselves."

My sense is that Washington articulated ideas and aspirations that were widespread among African Americans in the rural and small-town South, but had little to do with accommodating or submitting to the demands of white people. Their concern was, rather, with community development, economic independence, self-governance, and self-defense; with limited or no trust in the good intentions of white folk; and with efforts to distance themselves as much as possible from whites and to have few economic entanglements with them. In the years after emancipation, many African Americans lived chiefly among themselves, sometimes in black towns, more often in unincorporated black settlements on the edges of plantations or urban centers. In the 1870s and 1880s, some evinced an interest in emigrating to the West or even to Liberia; and by the 1920s, many of them, in the South or as recent migrants to the North, were drawn to Marcus Garvey (who was himself influenced by Washington while still in Jamaica) and his organization, the Universal Negro Improvement Association. Over time, they built schools, hired teachers, educated their children, organized mutual aid societies, opened small businesses, tried to protect each other from white harassment, and eventually worried that de-segregation might destroy much of what they had achieved. A good deal of what Booker T. Washington said about the ways of the world seemed accurate to them, as would be a good deal that Marcus Garvey, and then Malcolm X, said.

Booker T. Washington, in sum, must be placed in the intellectual and political genealogy of black nationalism as well as in that of civil rights. The complexity of his many legacies invites us to take a different, and perhaps more unsettling, view of American and African American history during the past century, one that might gauge the currents of black nationalism more seriously and the traditions of civil rights more critically. It may also help us to think more deeply about what Barack Obama's election does and does not represent.

There can be little question that Obama's successful campaign for the presidency was a stunning experience for a country that systematically exploited, repressed, and discriminated against people of African descent for four centuries. His political success can be seen as the culmination of black freedom struggles that have been under way for decades. A great many Americans have felt a new pride and hopefulness as to what the election of 2008 says about us as a people. But there are warning signs as well. It is no accident that Obama's is not the "up from slavery" story; and the controversy over Jeremiah Wright and the Trinity Baptist Church in Chicago that almost sank his candidacy reminds us of the suspicions and the misunderstandings that still engulf many whites and blacks, especially those who do not move among the well-educated, and increasingly integrated, upper middle class. Just five years ago, as we commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of the *Brown* decision, there was enormous pessimism about what had and had not been achieved since 1954—a powerful feeling among African Americans that they had paid a heavy price for desegregation (the destruction of black institutions and a black teaching corps) without receiving many of its benefits. Educational and social segregation, especially among black working-class families and the black poor, seem no less entrenched, and perhaps more intractable, than ever, since they are the products of profound historical inequalities rather than legal mandates.

Obama's election may have relieved some of the pessimism, but he—and we—would make a mistake to conclude that a "post-racial" era is upon us. The world of Booker T. Washington, the world that lent him ideas and sensibilities, and that energized him, still lives in some forms in our midst. It is a world of poor, struggling, self-respecting, and intensely proud people who have learned over many years to look to themselves and their communities, and to question the intentions of whites and other people whites have accepted. They have their own interpretations of how the society works, and where the power lies. (Some of them trade in elaborate conspiracy theories: tune in to African American talk radio.) Should Obama fail to develop urban policies that address their needs and aspirations, their patience with him will likely wear thin.

Yet Barack Obama's ability to tackle significantly the challenges of Booker T. Washington's legacies to the twenty-first century will also require him to displace what may be Washington's most encompassing legacy: the framework of "race relations." So long as "race relations" is the principle of social analysis as well as the basis of social description, so long as it organizes the language of social improvement and decline, so long as it is the measure of social progress, we will never be able to have the discussion we need about the sort of society we wish to live in and what we will have to do to bring it about. With every invocation of "race relations"—and we often hear the invocations as observers try to assess the social impact of Obama's presidency—the ghost of Booker T. Washington rears its head. That is not a good thing. ◆

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Washington Diarist

Common Grounded

"The notion of a world society is nothing new to Americans. It dominated the rhetoric of World War II, of the founding of the United Nations, of much of the cold war. It is now a received idea, and its impress may be measured by the success with which advocates have found audiences for issues defined in international terms: the world environmental problem; the world population problem; the world food problem." Those words, platitudes now, were written presciently in 1975, and continued: "Much of this internationalist rhetoric is based on things real enough. There *is* a world ecology; there *is* a world economy; and some measures important to individual countries can only be obtained through international accord. Thus the concept of interdependence has become perhaps the main element of the new consciousness of a world society." Daniel Patrick Moynihan made those observations long before the rage for globalization and the shrinking world. He wished to call into question the prestige of international consensus. What mattered for him, heretically, was the substance of that consensus. After all, history is littered with unanimous falsehoods, and with their results. Moynihan transposed the classical anxiety about the tyranny of the majority to the realm of international affairs, and contended that there will be circumstances when American ideas and American interests require of us a strategic concept that he called "the United States in opposition." I cannot imagine a strategic concept more contrary to the thinking of Barack Obama, who regards "the United States in opposition" as the problem that he was anointed to solve.

Since conservatives are once again enjoying that old cataclysmic feeling, it is important to point out that the minoritarian dignity espoused by Moynihan is not to be confused with the contemptuous diffidence practiced by Bush and Cheney. They believe that a wilderness makes a prophet. But there *is* a world ecology; there *is* a world economy; and some measures important to individual countries can only be obtained through international accord. The hour of conservative self-examination has passed. The right is now securely swaddled in its certainty that there are no lessons it need learn from the Republican defeat or the Democratic victory. But Bush is not around anymore, even if his mess still is. And if, for Bush, American isolation in the world was an honor, American isolation in the world is, for Obama, a disgrace; and this, too, is not acceptable. Obama's exquisite internationalism is also a kind of conformism. Everybody regards their world as the world: the United States under Bush was not wanting in allies, and Obama, too, has his preferred company for America. People admire Obama, at home and abroad, because his America is like their America; which is to say, they admire Obama because they admire themselves. The beautiful souls gave him a Nobel Prize for being a beautiful soul. We will soon discover that the popularity of an American president is a fact of minor strategic consequence. Anti-Americanism around the world is deep and tough and various. Most of it will not be dispelled by a black face and a Muslim name and a progressive smile. Multiculturalism is not a foreign policy. And enmity is the regular fate of states, and of superpowers, and of democracies.

Obama believes above all in common ground. The search for it is his most characteristic method in politics and in government. His diplomacy consists in underestimating differences and overestimating similarities. In Cairo, and at the United Nations, he argued that we must not be "defined by our differences." Actually, definition is the very work of difference; but I do not wish to be clever. For Obama, difference is the source of conflict. "So long as our relationship is defined by our differences," he said in Cairo, "we will empower those who sow hatred rather than peace." This notion of the essential bellicosity of difference is odd in someone who exalts diversity. It has led Obama to some of the most amateurish formulations in modern American diplomacy. "No one nation can or should try to dominate another nation." "No balance of power among nations will hold." Hope should be more intelligent than that. Obama has succumbed to one of the great fantasies of our time, which is that we have millenially broken the grip of zero-sum logic upon human affairs: "In an era when our destiny is shared, power is no longer a zero-sum game." In his search for similarity among nations, he often cites the slogan of "an interconnected world"; but an interconnected world is not a homogeneous, or a harmonious, world. Common problems do not entail common perspectives.

"Is there some basis external to oneself," Howard Thurman once asked, "for the hopes and dreams of harmonious relations between men of whatever kind, state, or condition?" Obama is rehabilitating the old "family of man" analysis of the world. His level of generality—his planetariness —is fine only for Sunday morning. For history is made selectively, locally, in the particular. We have shared traits, even significant ones, with all people, with all life. The question is, what is the commonality that counts for us, and when, and why. We always choose some commonalities over others. We have common ground with the Iranian regime, or so Obama insists, in our desire to avert a nuclear catastrophe. And we have common ground with the Iranian resistance, in our desire to promote liberty. In his policy toward Iran, Obama has so far honored one commonality and dishonored the other. His "engagement" with the illegitimate theo-fascist rulers in Iran, even as their show trials proceed, represents a decision to scant ostentatious differences in favor of dubious similarities. (The demotion of human rights by the common ground presidency is absolutely incomprehensible. The common ground is not always the high ground.) When it is without end, moreover, the search for common ground is bad for bargaining. It informs the other side that what you most desire is the deal—that you will never acknowledge the finality of difference, and never be satisfied with the integrity of opposition. There is a reason that "uncompromising" is a term of approbation. As for the "decent respect to the opinions of mankind" in the Declaration of Independence, it is a call for courtesy, not a call for agreement. Where there is no common ground, the common ground man is useless. It is just him and his halo.

Leon Wieseltier

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